

International Communist

No.8

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Editorial

The treachery of Lib-Lab anti-racism

THE NATIONAL FRONT continues to gain a remarkably high vote in by-elections.

Last year it polled 5.3% in the Greater London Council elections. It is all the more remarkable, when you take account of the fact that it draws votes only from the white electorate, which in some elections means excluding as much as one quarter of the voters.

The cadres of a serious fascist movement exist and they have an enormous field of grievances and **hopelessness** in which to sow and reap. Many of the fascist militants seem to be drawn from the working class, and the areas of serious support are usually in the more decrepit working-class districts.

The roots of the racism which is the main recruiting issue of the National Front are certainly in Britain's colonial past. It is 'flowering' as a result of specific conditions here and now. The growth in influence for the politics of the NF — vicious and stupid scapegoating, envious attempts to 'exclude' an entire section of the working class and to degrade them, foolish compensatory self-glorification according to ancestry — is a direct expression of the hopelessness engendered by the Labour Government. It is the other side of the passivity of the labour movement in the last three years and of the treachery of the Labour and trade union leaders; it expresses the 'socialism of idiots' for whom bread and butter reformism gives way to the desire that the counter-reforms should bite at someone else.

The Lib-Lab pact which was rushed in to splint the wobbly Labour government was the real verdict of the ruling class on the government's record. The NF vote is the comment of a sizeable and apparently growing section of

the working class. The most backward workers retreat from reliance on the labour movement to an attempt to rely on white British tribalism, compensating for the justified feeling of being excluded from the care and concern of society by the aggressive assertion that **they belong** — and that the others are the aliens, and moreover the cause of much of the disruption.

Virulent working class racism is growing in the social crisis of 1970s Britain. It is like the venom in the scorpion's tail — potentially it could sting the working class movement to death.

Hypocrisy

The now widespread and vociferous opposition of the Labour and trade union establishment to racist scapegoating and to the NF is treacherous and dangerous, and likely to aid the NF rather than stopping it in its tracks. It arises from the fact that the NF is now seen as a serious electoral threat by the Labour Party. From this came the valuable participation by the Labour Party in anti-fascist mobilisations like the one in Haringey, North London, in April 1977. **From it also comes a largely verbal and shallow opposition that fails to come to grips with the real problem while striving to create an illusion of doing 'something'.**

Where the Labour establishment participates in mobilisation, this should be **used** by the real opponents of racism and fascism. Where they posture, their hypocrisy should be ripped apart.

There are three central dishonesties in the labour movement in relation to the National

Front:

■ There is no concerted drive to eradicate racism in the labour movement, and to drive out fascists.

■ The Labour Government and the Labour Party leaders have been the trailblazers for racist immigration legislation. It was Labour in 1968 which paved the way for the Tory Act of 1971. Without a fight against the legislation which embodies and sets up in law all the most vicious assumptions of the racists, it is nonsense to speak of a fight against racism. **The official labour movement is one of the main carriers of the disease which the hypocrites of the Government and the TUC 'deplore'.**

■ Perhaps the central fraud of the official Labour campaign against racism and the NF **here and now**, in the fourth year of Labour government, is the pretence that it is possible to fight the growth of the NF without fighting the innumerable wounds inflicted by the capitalist system on the British working class — wounds which in certain areas have now begun to fester.

The growth of fascism and racism is so directly linked to the run-down condition of Britain that it is impossible to separate the fight against it from the fight against the attacks on the working class here and now — and against capitalism. It is foolish or treacherous to think it is.

In the fight against the NF, forces which do not stand against capitalism can be useful in direct confrontations with the NF — to the degree that they fight. In every other field of anti-fascist activity, they represent hypocrisy and treachery.

Tolerance

The 'liberals' like Callaghan (who as Home Secretary started the Gadarene stampede of white racism with the panic legislation against the Kenya Asians in 1968, which prepared for the Tories' 1971 Act), and liberals with better credentials like Michael Foot and Jack Jones, are the self-same people who are **responsible** for the growth of racism and the fascist vote among sections of the working people of Britain. They decry the NF but offer no positive alternative. The trade union leaders who offer **words** against the NF are directly responsible for creating the climate within the working class in which racist quackery and the NF are flowering. They offer **vapid and empty tolerance** to sections of the working class who are not liberals, nor tolerant, and who need answers, now.

All of their opposition to racism and the NF exists on the level of the most shallow and inconsequential **liberalism**. Much of it — and

almost all of its reflection in the media — is on a level of sheer incomprehension of the attitudes and feelings of many of those who are conned by the racists into accepting their lunacy as a solution to the problems they face. To give credence to this Liberal-Labour-Trade Union establishment anti-racism is to encourage a make-believe which is a complete evasion. From this flows a danger of continued fascist inroads into the working class. **Class struggle politics and ruthless mobilisation of the greatest possible forces to physically stifle the NF is the answer... not liberal do-gooding.**

The ANL

The Anti-Nazi League threatens to add to the confusion created by the treacherous Liberal-Labour windbagging against racism and the National Front. Its actual mobilisations are positive, but its structure is a behind-the-scenes alliance between public 'personalities', labour movement dignitaries, and the Socialist Workers' Party. To the degree that dignitaries — like for example Brian Sedgmore, a hero of the 'Tribune' faction of Left MPs which is sitting out the present crisis for the labour movement as a non-opposition to the Callaghan government — are able to present themselves as combatants against Nazism because of their association with the ANL, they will be **covering themselves** for their criminal failure to fight the government; and doing so at **no expense** to them! They do not mobilise forces, and therefore are not part of a legitimate united front. One of them, Syd Bidwell, Tribune MP and member of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Immigration, is helping to mobilise forces **on the other side** by his support for the **Powellite** report of that committee.

To the degree that the ANL pays for the dignitaries' names by expressions of support for bans by the state against fascists (**and others!**) — that is, expressions of confidence in the state to suppress fascism — it is undermining the most elementary needs of the fight against fascism: working-class self-reliance.

It means allowing the dignitaries, who do not have forces, or do not mobilise them for a united-front struggle, to extend the pernicious nonsense that fascism can be fought without eradicating its roots in the crisis which capitalism is inflicting on the working class, all the way through to an explicit avowal that the capitalist state can be relied on to deal with fascism and may even be tolerated when it 'even-handedly' deals a blow at the labour movement too.

Unless the ANL is brought round to a clear stand against immigration controls and against reliance on the state, and to a proper democratic united-front structure focused on united action, all its positive work will prove empty.

It is true that, according to the view of fascism which sees it as a mobilisation of the petty bourgeoisie and lumpen-ised workers to beat down and suppress the independent labour movement, Britain does not present such an alarming case as the noisy demonstrations and by-election activity of the NF seem, at first sight, to suggest. 51% of the employed population are in trade unions, the working class is the immense majority of the nation. Massive disappointment with the results of the present Labour government there may be — but there is no falling-off in membership of the organised labour movement. The NF has to tone down its anti-Labour Movement drive, and rely for its recruiting mainly on anti-black racism, into which the disappointment, dissatisfaction, and sheer bewilderment of sections of the white working class has poured.

The capitalist class is not about to throw its weight behind a fascist policy. The Labour government has proved a remarkably — even astonishingly — successful administration from the point of view of the ruling class. Four years ago there was talk of military coups, and private armies were being built up. Now the self-policing of the labour movement by its leadership, even to the point of drastic counter-reforms, seems to render unnecessary, from the bosses' point of view, any such risky assault on the labour movement.

Nevertheless, mechanistic complacency about the dangers posed by the NF would be criminal. Britain faces chronic decline, perhaps even a decline of the industrial workforce and of industrial production. Outside of a socialist revolution, the period ahead will be one of stagnation, in which a long war of attrition could develop between the labour movement and the fascists (perhaps entrenched in septic areas of fascist power: certain areas are already in this state).

Immensely strong labour movements — like the Austrian movement, up to the Dollfuss coup and Vienna civil war of 1934, have worn away in stagnation and impotence and have then been suppressed. There is no way out for the British working class unless it reorganises itself and overthrows capitalism.

Struggle

The battle to drive the fascists off the streets and out of the labour movement is an important part of the work of self-regeneration of the movement. So is the work of discrediting and silencing the treacherous and hypocritical 'official' labour movement noise against racism and the NF. A real struggle against racism and fascism will include a struggle against everything these people stand for — or it will never be won at all. We want real commitment for mobilisation

— enterprises which give their talk a credence and a platform without mobilisations are a hindrance, not a help, in the struggle against racism.

The end of social peace

HEINZ GUNTHER describes the breakdown of West Germany's "economic miracle", and, with it, of the West German bourgeoisie's "social peace".

DESPITE THE massive defeat of the German labour movement and its atomisation by the fascists, there were still struggles in the immediate post-war period in the areas occupied by the Allies. (The Russian army was more effective in putting down opposition to its policies). Workers demanded nationalisation of basic industries and more thorough-going purging of fascists. (Only leading fascists were ever punished; West Germany still harbours many ex-Nazis in leading positions, such as judges and industrialists).

However, these struggles were defeated by the British, American and French occupiers, aided by the policies of the SPD (Social Democratic Party) and KPD (Communist Party).

On this basis of a defeated working class and a massive injection of capital by American imperialism through the Marshall plan (★), West German capitalism slowly entered its massive post-war boom. It was not until 1950 that industrial production reached the level of 1925, and the West German share in world trade fell from 9.6% in 1938 to 3.6% in 1950. The early period of the boom was due more to increased productivity than any investment of fixed capital.

But West German capital regained its position on the world market, reaching the 1938 share of world trade again in 1958. A large industrial reserve army of unemployed (rising from 5.3% in 1948 to 10% in 1950) ensured the lowest wages in Europe. It was only from the end of the '50s, with unemployment falling, that real wages rose considerably. The economy had absorbed 12 million refugees and expellees from Eastern Europe: 21.4% of the population in 1961 (*).

(★) Under the Marshall plan, 8,000,000,000 D-mark of capital was introduced into West Germany by 1954.

From this starting point of low wages, high productivity, and high unemployment, the real gross national product of West Germany rose throughout the '50s by an average of 7%, and in the '60s by 4%. West Germany became the country with the third largest gross national product after the USA and USSR, until it was overtaken by Japan in 1968.

The first major recession took place in 1966-67, with the first post-war fall in the real gross national product. Unemployment and inflation remained low, though unemployment reached its highest level since 1959. By utilising the timidity of the trade unions to force a reduction of real wages, by extending its share of the world market, and by attacks on foreign workers (400,000 were expelled in 1966-67, with an equally large number left behind as a reserve army exposed to repressive laws which limited their rights to strike and organise), the German bourgeoisie overcame this setback without significant resistance.

But they have faced crisis since 1974-75. Inflation was at its post-war high of 6%, and unemployment topped a million for the first time since the early '50s. On the world market, their position was weakened by the rise of the D-mark compared to other currencies.

At present, all the experts agree that unemployment is more likely to increase than fall; indeed, "after three years of high unemployment signs have increased that most of the underemployment cannot be overcome in the course of one economic upturn" (§).

Most branches of industry want to reduce their workforce again in 1978, with 100,000 to 150,000 new unemployed expected on top of the 1977 average of one million. Predictions going further forecast no change in this

(*) Real wages (1938=100)

1945-47	160
1948-50	76
1951-56	93
1956-61	111

from Kuczynski: *Darstellung der Lage der Arbeiter im Westdeutschland seit 1945.*

trend — 1.3 million unemployed in 1980 (election year) and 1.7 million (8%) by 1985. Productivity is expected to increase further, but with rationalisations it will not reduce unemployment.

Investment has fallen continuously in the '70s (by an average of 6% a year), with the result that the average age of machinery continues to rise considerably. Whole branches of industry — steel, ship-building — can no longer stand up against competitors with lower wages and social costs. Ironically, some of these competitors use factories built with West German capital; an increasing number of West German firms, particularly the large ones, are concentrating on investment abroad.

Against this background the bourgeoisie's priorities become clear. West German wages are now amongst the highest in the world, increasing by 109% between 1970 and 1977, while profits increased only 69%. They want to cut real wages and raise the rate of exploitation.

The defeat of the German working class in the immediate post-war period allowed for the massive economic boom and for a large degree of integration of the trade unions with the state. In 1952 the *Betriebsverfassungsgesetz* (BVG — the law governing the rights of unions within the factories) was revised, gagging workers' rights in many ways, such as making the dissemination of political literature in factories illegal, committing workers' representatives on the joint management/workers' committees (*Betriebsräte*) to silence on issues affecting the workforce (such as plans for rationalisation, redundancies, etc.), West Germany was rearmed and absorbed into NATO; and in 1956 the KPD was banned.

In the following boom period there was little in the way of class struggle, increased wages being obtained with very little, if any, fight.

Throughout this period the Christian Democrats (CDU-CSU) formed the government, and it was only during the first major post-war recession in 1966-67 that it was thought necessary to bring the SPD into government in the hope of heading off unrest. In 1967 the 'Grand Coalition' of SPD and CDU was formed, with the SPD receiving responsibility for the important areas of foreign policy and the economy.

The SPD used this position to introduce wage 'guide lines' drawn up by meetings of the government, union leaders, and industrialists, and to discuss agreements with Poland, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany on the recognition of borders, in order to increase trade with Eastern Europe — something which industrialists had been

pushing for for a long time).

In September 1969 there were spontaneous strikes by miners and metal-workers. Such spontaneous, unofficial strikes are illegal in Germany, but the SPD did not feel confident enough of its electoral support to use the police and courts against them. Instead it let them run their course.

In 1969 the 'little coalition' of SPD and FDP (liberals) was formed. The SPD met the growing resistance by increasing the catalogue of repressive measures available to it, whilst demagogically selling them as 'reforms': a new revision of the BVG, militarisation of the police, hysteria against the left, and the introduction of the now well-known *Berufsverbote* in January 1972.

PUTSCH

In April 1972 the Christian Democrats tried a parliamentary 'putsch', and tens of thousands of workers struck in support of the SPD, calling for new elections and ratification of the agreements with the East European countries (on which the CDU generally agreed, but had used a few minor points to initiate a 'crisis'). Some local union leaders mobilised the strikers to Bonn, some even calling for a general strike.

The national trade union leaders didn't give any support, saying that political strikes were 'against the constitution'. Brandt, the SPD premier, thanked the strikers for their support, sent them home — and immediately came to an agreement with the CDU. Demonstrations took place on May Day that year, for the first time in years in many towns, in support of the SPD against the CDU.

At the beginning of 1973, with the SPD having won the election at the end of 1972 with a large majority; with inflation still at its height (7.5%); with a feverish and unstable upturn in the economy, the SPD boldly stated it was against any wage rises over 8%. The trade union leaders helped out here, accepting 8.5% after initially demanding 11% (much less than was called for in many union meetings) and being offered 5.5%.

As a result, unofficial strikes broke out in many factories over the next few months, demanding payment of the claim in full. One of the high points of these strikes was at the Hoesch works in Dortmund, where 75% of the 20,000 workers voted to reject the 8.5% in January and struck for the full claim. However, whereas the bourgeoisie gave in relatively quickly in 1969, they could not afford any compromise this time, and the strikes met massive resistance from the capitalists, SPD, and union bureaucracy. The leadership of the metal-workers union (IG Metall)

declared the Hoesch strike to be 'damaging to the union and illegal'.

What started out as a strike for a wage increase ended up as a 60-hour strike against the sacking of eight 'agitators', with the strike committee agreeing to call off the strike when the sacking notices were withdrawn. Many other strikes occurred around the claim for the full wage demand in the metal, steel, and public sectors. The pattern was similar throughout: isolated strikes, the union leaders calling for a return to work, lock-outs, and the sacking of militant leaders. It was at this time that the unions began the practice of expelling oppositionists, both far leftists and those leading strikes against the wishes of the union leaderships.

The lesson learnt by the SPD and the bureaucracy from these strikes was that higher settlements were necessary in the other wage rounds coming up if further unofficial strikes were not to take place. Thus in April the printers won an increase of 10.8%, after their first strike in 20 years. Even so there was still discontent over the agreement and the spate of unofficial strikes lasted well into the summer.

Besides the direct use of the police and courts against strikers, the main difference between the early 1973 strikes and those of September 1969 was that whereas the 1969 strikes had involved the higher-paid sections of workers, with the support of the lower layers of the union bureaucracy, the strikers of 1973 were mainly women, immigrants, and lower-paid workers, often striking against the factory leadership. At Ford Cologne, the chairman of the works committee led a group of German workers in beating up Turkish strikers.

One result of this was that those who had led the September 1969 strikes but had not broken with the SPD (often forming syndicalist groupings in the factories) were unable to withstand the pressure of the union leaderships and SPD and give a lead to the strikes. Likewise the DKP (reconstituted Communist Party) had given a lead in 1969, but in 1973 defended the union bureaucrats.

The unrest lasted into the first months of 1974, with the unions putting in demands as high as 15% (public sector) and even 18% (shipbuilding). Just under half of the public sector workers voted against the 11% increase granted after a three-day strike, and only 32% of 30,000 workers in the shipbuilding industry in the Bremen district voted for the 12.25% gained after a strike lasting three and a half weeks. However, with the defeat of the unofficial strikes in 1973, and increasing unemployment, this disquiet did not flow over into a repeat of the previous year's battles. By the end of 1974/beginning of

1975, union leaderships were accepting 9% and less (6.6% in the mining industry in February 1975).

Meanwhile the fear of being jobless has been used in recent years to hold down wages. There has been little fight-back against unemployment. Often the union bureaucrats were themselves members of boards which agreed to massive redundancies. The resistance was usually at small factories, with no support from the bureaucracy, and ending in defeat. Factory occupations were occasionally tried (as at the Erwitte cement factory of Seibel & Söhne), but were not able to resist the courts' declarations that such occupations were illegal.

In 1974-75, with the unemployment not disappearing as fast as in 1966-67, there was greater willingness to resist. In April 1975 20,000 demonstrated in Dortmund against youth unemployment, and 45,000 joined a DGB demonstration in November of the same year. This latter turn-out seemed to worry the bureaucrats more than pleasing them; they were more interested in pleas to the government than any action.

1976-77-78

With one major exception, wage negotiations went off quietly throughout 1976 and '77. Rises of 4.5 to 7% were the norm in 1976, usually being obtained without strikes. However, in April-May the printers struck for 13 days, demanding an increase of 9%. 88% of the workers voted for the strike. Many of those who were not on strike were locked out, and the workers faced police baton charges and arrests in many towns.

In Berlin the **trade union leaders** sent the police in against the printers — preferring to have only 1500 at their May Day rally, with 15,000 locked out, rather than have the workers disturb their eulogies for the SPD-FDP government. Two days later the bureaucrats of the print union, IG Drupa, agreed to increases of 6%.

This year, the government and the capitalists were confidently expecting wage negotiations to go as quietly as they did in 1976 and '77. They argued that increased wages would mean unemployment rising still further. However, after three years of high unemployment, this no longer had the same effect.

On 25th January, 16,000 dockers in the North Sea ports struck for the first time in 55 years. At the start of the wage negotiations, they had pushed the demand of their union, the OTV, up from 8.5% to 9%. Then they rejected, by a 57.8% vote, the planned increase of 7% agreed to by the

union leadership, and went on to win 115 Mark on top of that after another 3-day strike.

The union leaders and the government then protested that this could not be taken as the guide-line for wage claims in other sections.

Next in line were the printworkers. 50,000 jobs are to be lost in the next few years in the print industry by the introduction of new technology. The union's 'action programme' calls for a 35-hour week for all workers in the print industry, but in its negotiations it only raised the position of the typesetters, who are particularly hard hit by rationalisation.

The union leaders negotiated a compromise with the print bosses, but it was rejected and the strike broke out again. The final agreement, though still a lot less than the demands of the original 'action programme', goes a long way to protecting jobs — but it is divisive in that it covers only typesetters, and not all printworkers.

The latest to strike — at the time of writing — are the metal workers. 90.3% of metal workers in Baden-Württemberg and 86% in the Ruhr area voted to strike on the 8th March against the employers' offer of 4.8%. They were demanding 8%, although some union leaders have made it clear that they will accept anything over 5%.

In both the printworkers' and the metalworkers' strikes, several thousand workers have been locked out by their employers, in solidarity with those holding out against the strike. The last IG Drupa conference called on the leadership to consider occupations in the event of new lock-outs — but the bureaucrats did nothing. As for IG Metall, the only answer they have to the lock-out is to get each individual member to take the issue to court.

THE LEFT

It seems likely that other sections of workers will follow the lead of the dockers, the printers, and the metal-workers — making for a considerable breakdown of the 'social peace' that West Germany has known for the last 20 years.

This upturn in the class struggle opens opportunities for the German left to break out of its long isolation and build the base in the working class which it has seriously lacked. However, much of the left seems incapable of tackling this problem properly.

Within the SPD there is very little opposition. In the parliamentary party, there are only half a dozen MPs even as left as the Tribune group in Britain. The Jusos (SPD youth) have been emasculated and tamed by repression over the years, without any serious fight against it. The DKP has spent too

long defending the SPD and the union bureaucrats to be able to lead any fight against unemployment and repression. It declares itself in favour of *Berufsverbote* against the far left, and even initiates their expulsion from the unions.

Most of the far left is made up of Maoist currents of one kind or another. These groups are usually extremely sectarian, often to the extent of physically attacking each other and Trotskyists. Others have adapted to the bureaucracy in order to retain their (meagre) base in the unions.

The task of providing a lead to the German working class is left to those Trotskyists who can give a clear programmatic alternative to social democracy without either ultimatism or opportunism.

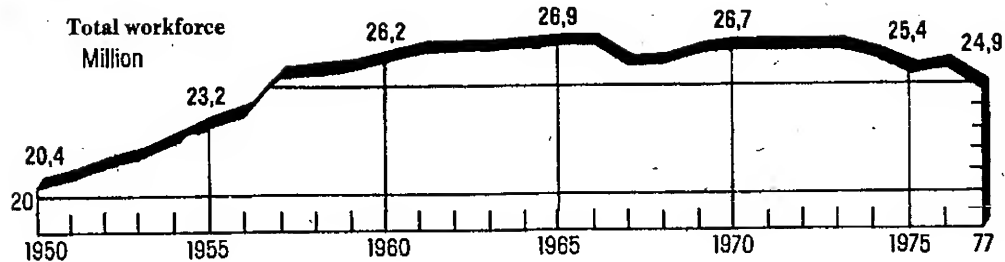
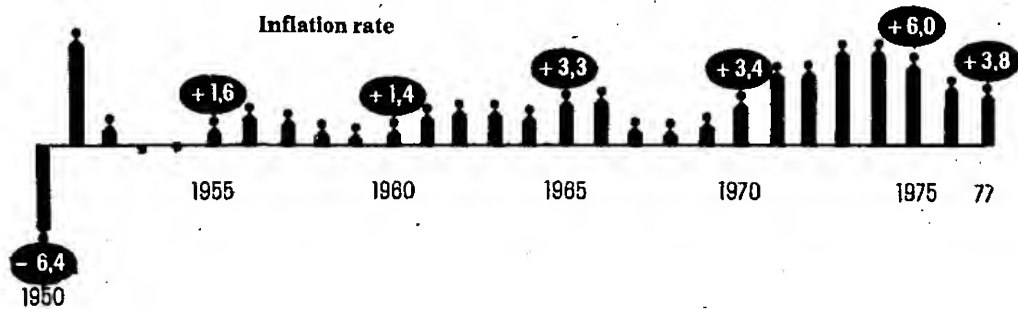
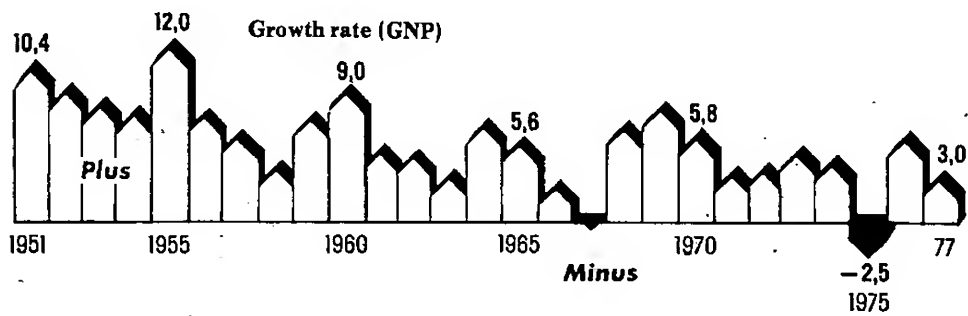
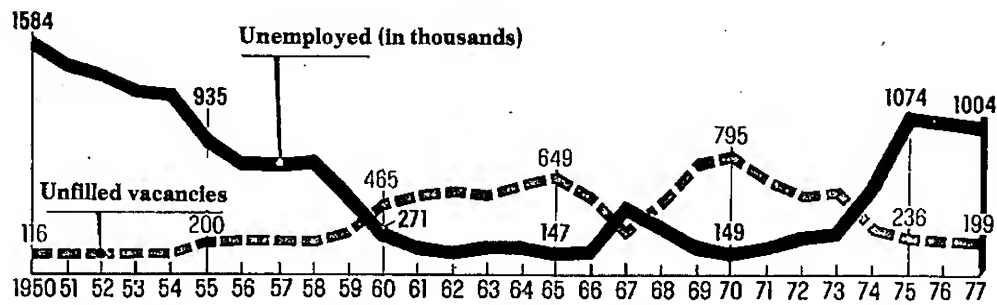
STRIKES AND LOCKOUTS IN WEST GERMANY 1950-74

	Workers involved:	Days lost:
1950	79,000	380,000
51	174,000	1,593,000
52	85,000	443,000
53	51,000	1,488,000
45	116,000	1,586,000
55	597,000	847,000
56	25,000	264,000
57	45,000	2,386,000
58	202,000	780,000
59	22,000	62,000
1960	17,000	38,000
61	21,000	65,000
62	79,000	451,000
63	317,000	1,846,000
64	6,000	17,000
65	6,000	49,000
66	196,000	27,000
67	60,000	389,000
68	25,000	25,000
69	90,000	249,000
1970	184,000	93,000
71	536,000	4,484,000
72	23,000	66,000
73	185,000	563,000
74	250,000	1,051,000

Quoted from *Gewerkschaften und Klassenkampf, Kritisches Jahrbuch* 1975. Strikes in which less than ten workers were involved, or that lasted less than a day, are not included unless more than 100 worker-days are lost. Lockouts are included in the figures: they were particularly important in 1963 and 1972.

The West German economy 1950-1977

From DER SPIEGEL



Revolutionaries in the French elections

by Alan Gilbert

THERE WAS, probably, more activity by revolutionaries in France's general election this March than in any election anywhere for decades.

The results were at first sight disappointing. The total votes gained, 557,075, were less than the combined score of the two revolutionary candidates in the 1974 presidential election (689,000). The percentage score, 2%, was much less than the 5.5% gained in thirty cities in the March 1977 municipal elections.

The revolutionaries' share of the vote was much bigger than in the 1969 presidential elections (when it was 1.1%) — but no bigger than the 1973 general election (2.1% of the vote, but in only 263 constituencies out of nearly 500).

Yet in fact the revolutionaries' score held up well. These were the elections at which the French Left hoped to gain a parliamentary majority for the first time in twenty years. Opinion was polarised between the big political parties.

Moreover, for several months before the elections the Communist Party had been putting on a show of left-wing militancy. This expressed itself almost exclusively in attacks on the supposed "right turn" of the Socialist Party, and not at all in any more left wing policies. Indeed, the CP's major policy change in the run-up to the elections was in a right-wing direction: it dropped its opposition to France having nuclear weapons. Yet without a doubt its more militant language enabled it to regain votes to its left.

In contrast, the left was represented in the 1974 presidential elections by François Mitterand, the leader of the Socialist Party and a man for whom many Communist Party militants have a healthy mistrust.

These factors, together with the twists and turns of the furious polemic the Communist Party and Socialist Party carried on for several months before the elections, presented complex problems for the revolutionaries. A tremendous desire for social change, mixed up with reformist illusions, was expressed in millions of workers' hopes for a Left victory in the elections: how could revolutionaries relate

to the desire for change without bolstering up the illusions? How could they criticise the illusions without letting the CP and SP leaders 'off the hook' on their promises of reform? How should they respond to the CP-SP polemic?

The different revolutionary organisations gave different answers to these problems.

The biggest campaign was that of **Lutte Ouvrière**, (LO), a Trotskyist organisation which defines itself as against other Trotskyist currents chiefly by its tenacious orientation to the factories and to the production of regular factory bulletins (of which it has over 250). LO ran candidates in all 470 constituencies of mainland France, getting 474,401 votes.

LO analysed the CP-SP polemic as an exercise in bourgeois political jousting, with the CP striving above all to stop the SP using the Left alliance to win votes and seats and then 'dumping' the CP in favour of a centre-left coalition. But the CP's attacks on Mitterand's betrayals meant something different to rank-and-file CP supporters. So LO waged no campaign for the CP and SP to mend their broken unity. Their approach was expressed in one of their posters: "No blank cheque for Mitterand. Arlette Laguiller said it before Marchais; she will still say it afterwards". (Marchais is the general secretary of the CP; Arlette Laguiller is the best known public figure of LO, their presidential candidate in 1974.)

In debate with the other revolutionary tendencies, LO placed great stress on the need to assert that a government of the Left would be no better than a government of the Right. Like the Social Democratic government in West Germany or the Labour government in Britain, a Communist-Socialist government in France would be as ruthless as the Right in trying to make the working class pay the cost of the capitalist crisis.

In "LO" of 24th February, however, the comrades replied to the objection: "You are both against the Right and against the Left. So what do you want?" in these terms: "It is true that we are against the Right, but we are not against the Left. We are on the Left,

and, because we are on the Left, we are against those who call themselves Left and will then in office carry on the same policies as the Right." And their campaign used slogans like "Vote as Left as possible — Vote LO".

"Don't trust Marchais and Mitterand" has been a constant theme of LO's election campaigns since 1973. So has been the appeal to vote for LO candidates as rank and file workers against professional politicians. 43% of LO's candidates at this election were industrial workers or technicians. What LO stressed as much, or even more, this time was the high proportion of women among their candidates (191 out of 470). One of their election slogans was "By voting LO you will vote for women, and you will vote Left."

LO gave less attention this time to challenging the CP and SP on their promises (or the gaps in their promises) than it did in 1973. The major political issue of LO's campaign was the atom bomb: an issue presumably chosen because of the CP's recent change of line, rather than for its centrality for a working class programme of struggle.

Before the election campaign proper, however, LO had carried out an extensive campaign of simple socialist agitation: for nationalisation without compensation, for planning of production, for resistance to unemployment, etc.

Both the preliminary campaign and LO's election campaign extended to every town or large village in France, including those many where LO previously had no presence. LO made a major turn from its previous strict concentration on large-scale industry, and consciously set out to address itself to workers of all sorts, to peasants, to small shopkeepers, to housewives, and to the entire working population. And as the election campaign proceeded, LO put more and more stress on the theme "Elect LO MPs". Towards the end, the major axis of their campaign had become the usefulness for working people of having revolutionary MPs, "if only one", who "will raise a scandal in Parliament when Mitterand and Marchais sell out".

At the conclusion of their campaign LO proclaimed the construction of a new workers' party as the next task of the hour. "Yes, a real workers' party, a real communist party, a truly socialist party, can emerge in the coming months. This is a necessary and an inspiring task" (LO, March 10th). "We have to build a party to the left of the CP and SP in the coming period" (LO 18th March).

LO maintained this perspective despite their relatively disappointing election results, pointing to the 8.4% that Arlette Laguiller got in her constituency as evidence that support for their ideas was still there.

Since the second round LO has dropped the slogan for a new party. But what did it mean?

In the past ("The Politics of *Lutte Ouvrière*" — see IC4) we have criticised LO's conception of building the revolutionary party: effectively, we believe, they ignore the need for a struggle for regroupment within the workers' movement, trusting instead to linear growth through one-by-one recruitment. The coming months in France are likely to see many big struggles, but probably not the sort of tumultuous upheavals that put all established organisations into the melting pot; LO's perspective, then, seems to represent a sudden speed-up attempt in the long perspective of accumulating members one by one. Our experience in Britain with such attempts — the Workers' Revolutionary Party and the Socialist Workers' Party — is a sad one.

In the municipal elections in March 1977, and in the 1973 general election, LO had joint slates with the LCR (French sister-group of the IMG). This time, evidently, LO felt that an alliance with the LCR would be more of a hindrance than a help. The LCR had a joint slate with two smaller organisations, the OCT (a semi-Maoist group, something like Big Flame in Britain) and the CCA (a semi-Trotskyist group, led by Michel Pablo).

The LCR and its allies had a much smaller campaign than LO: 166 candidates, 82,674 votes, an average of only half as many votes as LO where they were in direct competition.

The LCR's balance-sheet was: "The choice of having a campaign which clearly criticised the Common Programme, which defended the necessity of workers' unity, and which put forward the elements of a working class programme against austerity, was a deliberate one. If we shared with the comrades of LO the desire to express a broad-based distrust of the Union of the Left, we also wanted to prepare the workers for the coming battles, while the comrades of LO preferred to focus everything on the role of LO MPs" (Felix Lourson in *Rouge*, 14th March).

It is true that the LCR's campaign contained more explanation and agitation for political demands than LO's; but there was so much agitation, for so many demands, that it is doubtful whether much of it came across clearly. The LCR was caught in the recipe-book politician's nightmare: agitating for every revolutionary demand, all at once, is little different from agitating for none — so either one has to choose a couple of demands to repeat, parrot-fashion, in all times and circumstances, or one has to learn to select the key demands for use in each different concrete situation.

The most prominent theme of the LCR's campaign was "Workers' Unity". The LCR stressed that this meant unity at the base as

well as unity at the top; but in the absence of any concrete anchorage for the "workers' unity" agitation at rank and file level, more and more the LCR seemed to be agitating for Mitterand and Marchais to get together again. The LCR protested that they were for CP-SP unity, but only "on an anti-capitalist programme"; again, this was not given concrete anchorage, and must have appeared as merely a call for CP-SP unity accompanied by radical patter.

There was a similar problem with the LCR's criticisms of the Union of the Left. A Left government would be a bourgeois government, said the LCR... because it would preserve the market economy and the bourgeois state. Criticism posed at that level of generality, together with the heavy stress the LCR placed on voting CP or SP in the second round (*), must have made many people think the LCR reckoned a Left government would nevertheless be much better than the Right.

The second round became a major issue of dispute between LO and the LCR. LO made a point of refusing to say in advance what they would recommend in the second round. The point was, presumably, to avoid diverting attention from the first round; and it is true that at times the LCR seemed to be agitating more for a CP-SP vote on the second round than for an LCR vote on the first round! Moreover, the LCR virtually made a principle, rather than a tactic, of saying the best-placed

(*) Elections in France take place in two rounds. After the first round all candidates getting less than 12½% are eliminated. Usually most other candidates stand down too, in favour of better-placed allies, leaving a run-off between one Left candidate and one Right candidate on each constituency on the second round.

"workers'" candidate should be backed on the second round. Nevertheless, when LO finally came out in favour of voting Left on the second round, no-one had ever thought they would do otherwise.

The LCR-OCT-CCA joint slate cannot be reckoned a success. They originally announced 258 candidates, but actually fielded far fewer (166 it seems, though Rouge immediately after the elections cited 184). The OCT had a major split half-way through the campaign, and the LCR a minor one, in their former stronghold of Rouen. The campaign was dogged by disputes on the attitude to the Union of the Left, (the OCT reckoned the LCR was too uncritical) and on the organisation of the campaign. (*)

In Britain the electoral system, the political situation, and the structure of the labour movement are different. Revolutionary tactics for the coming elections cannot be worked out by just transposing what revolutionaries have done in France. One lesson, however, is clear and relevant. Marxists have to use elections to popularise the basic ideas of revolutionary socialism. But our criticism of Labour must be anchored in immediate issues of the day — and focused round a few, selected issues, too. Otherwise the purist desire to "cover" every issue all the time leads to agitation pitched at a level which has no real cutting edge against Callaghan and Healey. That can only serve to salve consciences, not to carry out the real tasks of revolutionaries.

(*) The LCR insisted that each candidate should be the candidate of his or her organisation, and each organisation should make its own propaganda, while the OCT and the CCA wanted a coalition more like "Socialist Unity" in Britain.

What is 'Western Marxism'?

Debate

In his book **Considerations on Western Marxism** (New Left Books, 1976) Perry Anderson has attempted a general assessment of the achievements of academic and semi-academic Marxism in Western Europe and the USA since the 1920s — 'Western Marxism' — and its relevance for revolutionary politics. **S. Morant** and **Chris Reynolds** review some of the questions which Anderson raises.

For Morant, the key flaw in Anderson's account is the concept of 'Western Marxism' itself.

IN THE LATE 1960s the magazine *New Left Review*, under the editorship of Perry Anderson, set itself the task of bringing Western Marxism to the British left. The theoretical justification for this project was outlined by Anderson in his article, 'Components of a National Culture' (*New Left Review* no. 50, 1968). He argued that England lacked any significant revolutionary culture because of the specific form taken by the bourgeois revolution in England. Whatever the merits of this argument, there was no doubt that the revolutionary upsurge on the Continent, student radicalisation, and disillusionment with Labourism awakened a considerable interest in 'Western Marxist' theory. Anderson's book tried to draw a balance-sheet of what NLR sought to make available, and in so doing seems to draw to a close a chapter in the history of NLR itself.

Anderson does this by providing a highly critical account of the evolution of 'Western Marxism', contrasting it sharply with the traditions of classical Marxism and posing the need to overcome the kind of theoretical and political activity that it represents.

The book begins with a sketch of the 'classical tradition', which begins with Marx and Engels and draws to a close with the Bolsheviks and the theoreticians of the Second International such as Luxemburg and Hilferding. Anderson finds three basic stages in the development of this tradition. The first was the work of Marx and Engels themselves. The second stage was that of Second Internationalists like Kautsky, Mehring, and Plekhanov, who were concerned with systematising historical materialism "as a comprehensive theory of man and nature, capable of replacing rival bourgeois disciplines and providing the workers' movement with a broad and coherent vision of the world that could easily be grasped by its militants" (p.6).

The final stage of this classical tradition was primarily that of the Bolshevik party and the theorists of the Russian Revolution. Here, for the first time, a coherent revolutionary strategy was worked out, leading to the conquest of state power by the working class and its allies.

It is this last heroic period of classical Marxism, exemplified in the figure of Lenin, that provides Anderson with his model of what revolutionary Marxism should be like, in its close connection of theory and practice, its attention to the concrete problems of revolutionary strategy and the construction of socialism.

By the 1930s that tradition was almost completely destroyed. The revolutionary tradition of the Third International was carried forward only by the tiny forces of Trotskyism.

Anderson argues that the theoretical work produced in the 1930s and post-war by 'Western Marxists' was quite unlike that of the classical period in many respects. Although it was connected to that period in such figures as Lukacs, Gramsci, and Korsch, who were all at one time or another leading figures in the respective Communist Parties, the central concern of this period was philosophy rather than politics.

"Western Marxism as a whole thus paradoxically inverted the trajectory of Marx's own development itself. Where the founder of historical materialism moved progressively from philosophy to politics and then economics, as the central terrain of his thought, the successors of the tradition that emerged after 1920 increasingly turned back from economics and politics to philosophy — abandoning direct engagement with what had been the great concerns of the mature Marx, nearly as completely as he had abandoned direct pursuit of the discursive issues of his youth" (p. 52).

For Anderson, 'Western Marxism' is marked by the following features:

□ "In the absence of the magnetic pole of a revolutionary class movement, the needle of the whole tradition tended to swing increasingly towards contemporary bourgeois culture"

(p. 55). Idealism in various forms exercised a pervasive influence: Lukacs and Hegel, Gramsci and Croce, the Frankfurt school and Freud, Sartre and existentialism, Althusser and Freud. (Anderson assumes — without proof — that both Freud and Piaget, who strongly influenced Lucien Goldmann, were 'idealist').(*)

"This constant concourse with contemporary thought-systems outside historical materialism, often avowedly antagonistic to it, was something unknown to Marxist theory before the First World War" (p.58).

□ Efforts were made to tie Marx into pre-Marxist philosophical traditions. Indeed, what passes for contemporary Marxist philosophy is often little more than a rooting around earlier philosophical systems trying to link Marxism up to them. Colletti tries Kant; Lukacs settled for Hegel; Althusser surprisingly opts for Spinoza; and so on. It is true that Marx himself did not pay much attention to many of the philosophical problems which were dealt with by bourgeois philosophers like Kant, Hume and the rest, and they deserve some attention. But that is different from trying to create a marriage of those philosophers' ideas with Marxism.

□ 'Western Marxism' concentrated almost entirely on the examination of the superstructure, and above all art: Lukacs and Sartre on literature, Adorno and Benjamin on aesthetics.

"Aesthetics, since the Enlightenment the closest bridge of philosophy to the concrete world, has exercised an especial and constant attraction for Western Marxists. The great wealth and variety of the corpus of writing produced in this domain, far richer and subtler than anything within the classical tradition of historical materialism, may in the end prove to be the most permanent collective gain of this tradition" (p.78).

□ Arising outside a truly revolutionary movement either nationally or internationally, 'Western Marxism' reflected this isolation in parochialism and political pessimism. "Astonishingly, within the entire corpus of Western Marxism, there is not one single serious appraisal or sustained criticism of the work of one major theorist by another..." (p.69). Cut off from a revolutionary movement, and from each other, 'Western Marxists' developed a tone of over-riding pessimism about the prospects for proletarian revolution. It even — so Anderson argues — affected a revolutionary politician like Gramsci, who, buried in Mussolini's prisons, wrote: "There is not even the choice between living for a day like a lion, or a hundred years like a sheep. You don't live as a lion, even for a minute, far from it; you live like something lower than a sheep for years and years and know that you have to live like that". Similar attitudes have been struck by people like Marcuse, Sartre, and Althusser, who, unlike Gramsci, survived fascism.

Anderson argues that, despite all its negative features, 'Western Marxism' is an integral part of the history of the workers' movement, and no revolutionary socialist can afford to be ignorant of it. The task now is to overcome the limitations that have beset Marxism since the 1930s. Are there any pointers for this task? Apart from the classical tradition, Anderson believes there is one — the work of Trotsky. Anderson cites the theoretical and practical achievements of Trotsky, and comments that "the historical scale of Trotsky's accomplishment is still difficult to realise today" (p. 97).

The book winds up by re-emphasising that the major problems which — in Anderson's opinion — were unresolved by classical Marxism do not lie in the realm of philosophy, but in politics and economics. For Anderson, a key problem is the nature of bourgeois democracy, and the appropriate forms of socialist democracy.

That is Anderson's argument. How are we to assess it?

Throughout the book, Anderson betrays many of the faults which he is criticising. He notes that "the extreme difficulty of language characteristic of much of Western Marxism was never controlled by the tension of a direct or active relationship to a proletarian audience" (p. 54). This extreme 'difficulty of language' also exists very often in the magazine which Anderson edits, and in Anderson's own writing. The book is often very abstract where it should be very concrete. This is particularly the case in the sections dealing with Trotsky. Perhaps disingenuously, Anderson feigns almost complete ignorance of the history of the Trotskyist movement since the death of Trotsky — a history essential for any balanced account of the legacy of Trotsky. Anderson contents himself with saying "There is no space here to unravel the subsequent legacy of Trotsky's thought and work. One day this other tradition — persecuted, reviled, isolated, divided — will have to be studied in all the diversity of its under-

(*) No analysis is provided of Freud and Piaget: one can only assume that it is simply because of their concern with individual psychological development that they have been deemed idealists. Trotsky, however, wrote that Freud's theories provided a "working hypothesis that can produce and undoubtedly does produce deductions and conjectures that proceed along the lines of materialist psychology" ('Culture and Socialism', 1926). As for Piaget, he has produced a materialist critique of structuralism and a complex system of child psychology which has yet to receive an adequate Marxist assessment.

ground streams and channels. It may surprise future historians with its resources" (p. 98).

Since the war, the Trotskyist movement has tried to come to grips with some of the central problems of Marxism posed by Anderson. The characterisation of the deformed workers' states; the debate on the post-war boom; the attempt to build an International; organisational forms relating to work in social-democratic and centrist currents — all these issues, and many more, have been tackled by various Trotskyist currents. This 'other tradition', with its successes and failures, seems to have passed Anderson by. Revolutionary Marxist militants are attempting now to come to a fully worked out critical assessment of that tradition, the tradition out of which we ourselves have arisen. It is a task that is far too important to be left to 'future historians'.

Side by side with this lack of a concrete assessment of Trotskyism runs a correspondingly deficient analysis of the political attitudes and practices of 'Western Marxism'. Anderson notes that it is almost a defining feature of 'Western Marxism' that the theorists are professional academics, with little active political commitment except sometimes an uneasy relationship with the Communist Parties. This is formally correct, but avoids the real point, their relationship to Stalinism. Some, like Sartre, have in general been critical of the reformism, chauvinism, and bureaucracy of the Stalinist parties; others like Lukacs and Althusser have half-heartedly toed the official party line. Althusser is a prime example. In "For Marx" he leans towards a philosophical justification for Stalinism, connecting the notion of the 'weakest link' with 'socialism in one country'. In the British CP's journal "Marxism Today", he recently discussed the Lysenko case in abstract phrases about 'self-criticism', as if the whole experience could be reduced to a few critical words among friends. This amounts to nothing more than a sophisticated cover-up for the murder of some of the finest scientists in the USSR during the 1930s.

It is a crucial flaw in Anderson's presentation that he avoids any real analysis of the political activity and ideas of 'Western Marxism'. Granted that the people whom Anderson is discussing are important mainly for their philosophical ideas, rather than their politics, the political dimension must still be dealt with. Without it, the book falls into the same pitfalls that it tries to condemn.

A political analysis in fact reveals that the very term, 'Western Marxism', is unsound. How does Anderson define it? A cynical answer would be: the authors who have figured prominently in the pages of NLR over the last few years. Beyond that Anderson's only criteria can be a common philosophical attitude, a common form of expression, a common stance towards the possibility of proletarian revolution. Apart from the last, these criteria are entirely intellectual. Thus Anderson sums up a tradition by using the very concepts which that tradition expresses and which he urges us to reject.

The very literary, over-intellectual approach is shown in Anderson's statement that all the major thinkers of 'Western Marxism', with the exception of Horkheimer, have remained "immune from reformism" (p. 93). But political passivity is in many ways a worse infection than reformism — and one that affects many 'Western Marxists'! The prolonged passivity and political pessimism that Anderson documents surely shows that some of the 'Western Marxists' simply aren't Marxists at all.

Marx said that what was distinctive about his theory was not the recognition of the class struggle, but recognition of the need to struggle for the proletarian dictatorship. In this sense, are Marcuse, Adorno, or any of the Frankfurt school, Marxists? How does Althusser react to the increasingly obvious reformism of the French Communist Party?

The book fails, in the end, to make out a sufficiently good case for the unity of something called 'Western Marxism'. However, I don't think that this is a fatal flaw, and indeed it is partly corrected in an Afterword written nearly two years after the main text was completed.

Despite the faults of the book, which includes a pervasive spontaneism (°), it has many merits. It provides a comprehensive overview of a particular intellectual tradition, throwing much fresh light on it, and vividly indicting it.

At the same time Anderson correctly points out that some of the central problems of the revolutionary movement have yet to receive an answer, and will not get from raking over the coals of classical Marxism or from dogmatic posturing. Too many would-be Trotskyist groups, in their rush to find a philosopher's stone which will dissolve all the problems that revolutionaries face, end up by turning their backs on Marxist theory altogether. If Marxism is ever to

° The spontaneism comes out most clearly at the end of the main text, where Anderson makes the regeneration of Marxist theory hinge on a mass working-class upsurge. Throughout the book a similar connection is assumed, implicitly or openly. Yet class struggle did not stop after the 1920s — and the Trotskyists related to that struggle, whereas the 'Western Marxists' did not. In the Afterword Anderson realises that his original conception was spontaneist, and instead he seems to retreat towards an academic approach.

overcome the crippling effects of Stalinism, fascism, and their aftermath, we will need more books like Anderson's... only better (†).

Chris Reynolds argues that Anderson's analysis is flawed by the same pessimism regarding revolutionary prospects that Anderson himself shows as pervading the thinking of the 'Western Marxists'.

ANDERSON'S BOOK reminds me of Thurber's Miss Groby. Miss Groby was the schoolteacher whose concern with poetry was entirely focused on its classifications and literary forms. Like Miss Groby with her poets, Anderson has his lists of Marxist theorists, complete with dates of birth and death, places of birth, and titles of their major works. Like Miss Groby, he discusses forms of expression, distinctive concepts, and influences while remaining apparently almost unconcerned with the purpose and content of the works being discussed.

Almost unconcerned — not entirely so. For Anderson (like many Miss Grobys) does feel a pull towards moving from academic commentary to actual activity and creation. This pull distances him from the academic Marxism which he discusses sufficiently to make some sharp critical comments on it. Yet his comments remain comments from *inside* — and, in my view, their limitations serve to show the necessity of stepping *outside* the 'Western Marxist' tradition.

I find the book's main value in the same place where Morant finds its chief fault: in its efforts to show the unity of 'Western Marxism'. Even if one added other theorists like Sweezy (who is discussed briefly but separately) to Anderson's selection of 'Western Marxists', the main lines of his analysis would still hold (*).

Morant's objection that Anderson selects the 'Western Marxists' according to 'intellectual criteria' is unjustified. In general there is nothing idealist in recognising schools of thought united by certain ideological themes. In this particular case, Anderson's analysis reveals a unity between the 'Western Marxists' determined by the political reality underlying their theorising (their equivocal relation to Stalinism) despite apparent sharp contrasts of ideas. It is, indeed, a vindication of materialism. The best parts of the book are where Anderson shows how the 'Western Marxists' tend to a view of nature as counterposed — indeed, hostile — to humanity (pp. 81-92), and where he shows how they tend to a view of reality as inescapably *obscure*.

These are the features of attempts to generalise about the processes of change of humanity, nature, and their interrelations in abstraction from revolutionary working-class practice. "All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and the comprehension of this practice", wrote Marx — and the story of 'Western Marxism' confirms the assertion.

As a consequence 'Western Marxism' has been *sterile*. It is not just that the 'Western Marxists' have been personally isolated (Marx himself was isolated for much of his life); their theories, even when widely published, have never served to guide political action (though the ideas of some of them, particularly Althusser and Marcuse, have been used in *rationalisation* of courses of political action).

New Left Review is an illustration. Some of the group round Anderson have opted for political militancy (and it is to their credit, even if they have chosen the wrong political address). Perhaps it is under their pressure that Anderson has distanced himself from 'Western Marxism'. Yet it is impossible to see any distinctive intellectual contribution which the comrades concerned — Robin Blackburn, Quintin Hoare, Norman Geras — have brought from NLR to the group in which they chose to become militants, the IMG.

The 'apocalyptic' ending of Anderson's book (that's how he describes it himself, in the Afterword) represents an incoherent protest against that sterility. "When a truly revolutionary movement is born in a mature working class, the 'final shape' of theory will have no exact precedent. All that can be said is that when the masses themselves speak, theoreticians — of the sort the West has produced for fifty years — will necessarily be silent".

The apparent optimism thinly conceals a deep pessimism. "The successful pursuit of Marxism" is delegated to "the masses themselves" some time in the future. As for the tasks of Marxists in *preparing* the emergence of a truly revolutionary movement, Anderson is silent.

† At one point Anderson comments that 'Western Marxism' is characterised by books about Marxism, rather books *in* Marxism. The same obviously has to be said for Anderson's book itself. It is, though, a necessary step in clearing the ground.

(*) Anderson's selection is biased towards philosophers (excluding, for example, historians), probably because NLR, in its search for Marxist culture to import into Britain, has looked for generalising theories rather than specific studies. Indeed, NLR's operation reflects a philistine and eclectic idea of 'theory' as something like food, nourishing in all its varieties but the more delicately cooked and exotic, the better...

When he refers to Trotskyism, he mentions only Deutscher, Rosdolsky, and Mandel, without any reference to the major political debates in Trotskyism since Trotsky, and without any reference to Mandel's role as not only an economist but also anchor-man for 30 years for a definite political tendency.

For the Trotskyist militant reading this passage, it is rather like being ushered into an academic soirée with cries of "Look at these fellows here! Really remarkable, what they've done! And they've none of our advantages!" We are reminded of James Burnham's approving account of a friend who recounted that when taking part in an armed insurrection he was most impressed by what a pretty scene it made in the morning sunshine. What a pretty exhibit the literary productions of our revolutionary movement will make for the professors of the future!

In his afterword, Anderson retreats from the incoherent protest of the book's original ending. He objects that there are limits to the closeness of the unity of theory and practice because theory is pre-eminently concerned with the **past** and practice with the **present**. "It is strange", he writes, "that [this objection] has not been made more frequently before". The reason, surely, why it has not been made more frequently before (at least by Marxists) is that Marxism sets out to comprehend reality, not only as it has been and is, but in its process of becoming other than what it is; and that 'the anatomy of the man is the key to the anatomy of the ape', that the key to understanding the past can often be found in the present. The limits on the unity of theory and practice, and the objections to Anderson's original conclusion, are to be found elsewhere.

Anderson views not only 'Western Marxism' and Trotskyism, but also 'classical Marxism', in an academic way. This gives rise to a blind spot. The Leninist Comintern is absent from his history of Marxism. Yet the theoretical work of 1920-22, although expressed for the most part tersely in resolutions and theses rather than full-length books, summed up and systematised the politics of revolutionary Marxism as has never been done comparably before or since. Anderson also classifies Gramsci, the early Lukacs, and the early Korsch, with 'Western Marxism' — and then finds himself obliged to record them again and again as exceptions. Overriding any similarity these theorists have with 'Western Marxism' (e.g. a leaning to idealism) there is a radical difference. They wrote as militants. Their work aimed to answer actual problems of the workers' movement, most especially the problem of how the Second International had made Marxism an anti-revolutionary doctrine.

It is a valuable book to put into the hands of any young comrade who is in danger of being seduced from political militancy into trying to unravel the labyrinthine intricacies of 'Western Marxism' as the theoretical precondition for militancy. Yet there is one other result of Anderson's failure to break out of the framework of academic 'Western Marxism'. That is an extremely sloppy fashion of dealing with many theoretical problems: For all the fastidiousness of Anderson's language, and the evident breath of his reading, he is still one of those who can play with ideas and phrases light-mindedly because there is no check in experience and practice.

Even when he raises real theoretical problems (permanent revolution, political revolution) he does not pose the questions sharply. It is worst on the question of democracy. On page 12 Anderson declares that Lenin's political theory was limited by the context of the Tsarist Empire, and thus was inadequate to bourgeois democratic societies. On pages 116 and 117 he repeats this thought, and even says that the weakness of the British and American CPs in the 1920s was a result of this inadequacy. On page 16 he praises Rosa Luxemburg's critique of the Bolshevik Revolution as unduly repressive, and repeats this thought on page 117. (†) On pages 114 to 120 he insists on the inadequacy of Marxist theory on the bourgeois democratic state. He places great stress on the unprecedented extension and solidity of bourgeois democracy since World War Two.

Yet there already exist Marxist analyses of the stifling of proletarian democracy in the USSR (Trotsky), of the bourgeois democratic state (Lenin), of tactics in bourgeois democracy (the left in the Second International, as codified by the early Comintern, and the American Trotskyist movement), and of the errors of the early American CP (Cannon) and early British CP (Brian Pearce, basing himself on Trotsky). What does Anderson have to add?

† Anderson complains that Lenin's last writings do not contain proposals for the revival of the soviets (p. 116-117). But the organisational form of soviets is not a cure-all. In the conditions of Russia in 1921-23 soviets could only be instruments of the party or organs of counter-revolution or abortive anarchist revolution opening the way to counter-revolution. A healthy revival of soviet democracy required first a revival of the party, of industry, and of the working class. Lenin and Trotsky turned their attention in that direction.

It is true, of course, that there were excesses of repression. These were generally due not to failures of Bolshevik theory, but to the harsh and tense atmosphere of the hard-pressed revolutionary state.

What he has to add is a condemnation of the fact that Trotsky's "essays (I) on the Popular Front in France dismissed the traditional organisation of the local petty bourgeoisie, the Radical Party, as merely a party of "democratic imperialism" that must on principle be excluded from any anti-fascist alliance" and the view that Trotsky's position on the Second World War was wrong because "justified by an assertion that since the whole imperialist world was deteriorating towards economic disaster in the '30s anyway, the distinction between the two forms of capitalist state (Bourgeois democracy and fascism) had ceased to be of practical importance for the working class" (pp 119, 120).

One doubts that Anderson has actually studied Trotsky's writings on either question. Trotsky declared that any radical petty bourgeois who actually wanted to fight fascism should not be excluded from the "committees of action" (see the article "For Committees of Action, not the People's Front"), but that a parliamentary alliance with the bourgeois tops of the Radical Party (i.e. the Popular Front) could only serve to paralyse the anti-fascist struggle. In the Second World War, Trotsky denied that the war was a fight between bourgeois democracy and fascism — but, so far from neglecting the difference of those two forms of capitalist class rule, he participated in the working out of a policy (the "proletarian military policy") specifically designed to link anti-fascist struggle and internationalism.

What's worst is that Anderson does not draw out his views to a conclusion. If class collaboration was permissible against fascism in France in the 1930s, then where else and when else is it permissible? In the Second World War, the clash between the social patriots and the internationalists was not an academic debate: the social patriots witchhunted, jailed, or murdered the internationalists as they found necessary. Does Anderson approve? Or what alternative social-patriotic policy would he recommend?

These half-thoughts represent a real awe of bourgeois democracy — a horror at its norms being violated by rough revolutionary necessity, and lack of confidence in the possibilities of fighting it.

In the end, Anderson shares the pessimism characteristic of "Western Marxism".

WHICH WAY TO REVOLUTIONARY UNITY?

COMRADES,

This is in reply to your article 'Worst of Both Worlds' (Workers' Action 18th Feb.) and your statement 'For Revolutionary Unity on a Revolutionary Programme' of November 1977. I apologise in advance that this letter is longer than normal for a paper but you have stressed the need for clarity and discussion and therefore this provides an opportunity to outline clearly relations between the International Marxist Group and the I-CL in relation to revolutionary unity.

What bases for unity

The first thing we should note from your recent articles and statements is that there appears to be agreement between us on the question of defining the class character (i.e. the revolutionary, reformist or centrist nature) of political organisations of the workers' movement. Already in *Workers' Action*, in a series of articles on revolutionary unity, you have stated: "The communists broke not only from those who sided with the bourgeoisie (the reformists), but also from the waverers (the centrists)" (WA 4th November 1976).

We entirely agree with this. In the famous words of the Communist Manifesto, revolutionaries "have no interests separate and apart from those of the working class as a whole". From this flows not merely that all trends within

the political positions of the proletariat should be included in the revolutionary party; but that not only those who defend the interests of the bourgeoisie but those who vacillate between the capitalists and the working class, the politically petty bourgeois centrists, are therefore excluded.

However, simply declaring that all revolutionaries should be united in a party distinct from the political representatives of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie is of course to achieve only part of the necessary clarity. It raises the question of how to determine who actually are communists, centrists, and reformists. It is therefore an important question that your statement 'For Revolutionary Unity on a Revolutionary Programme' gives an entirely correct Marxist materialist criteria for this: "the crucial criterion is where each tendency stands in relation to 'the greatest tests of the international class struggle'."

Such a position means decisively rejecting sectarian concepts prevalent on the extreme left in Britain, that the basis for unity must be finally decided by theoretical or historical criteria (which involves an abandonment of Marxist materialism) or by agreement or disagreement on tactics (which is a sectarian concept in the strict Marxist class sense).

Errors

However, having made this correct beginning, your statement on revolutionary unity then proceeds to go completely off the rails.

When you come to deal with

the "greatest tests of the international class struggle" one would expect to find, to take merely events of the post-war period, a concentration on such decisive questions as the Russian invasion of Hungary, the Cuban revolution, the war in Vietnam, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the May-June 1968 events in France, Chile, etc. Unfortunately, however, even when your statement does note some of these really "greatest tests of the international class struggle" — for example the Cuban revolution, the Vietnam war, and France '68 — they are dealt with cursorily and in some cases in an extremely distorted one-sided fashion. Other absolutely decisive events — for example the invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia and the Chilean defeat — are not dealt with at all.

In short, despite its assertions to your contrary, your statement does not at all concentrate on the really decisive events forming post-war politics and the lessons to be drawn from them.

Where however the document does go into considerable length is in relation to events and questions which are not even remotely the "greatest tests of the international class struggle". Some of the supposedly 'decisive issues' listed are quite frankly ludicrous by any serious scale of values. Thus for example figuring prominently among these "greatest tests of the international class struggle" are the referendum on British membership of the EEC, and the necessity to explicitly condemn the slogan "Labour to power on a socialist programme"!!!

This is a very revealing insight into your scale of values. If you really believe that the referendum on British EEC membership, or the slogan "Labour to power on a socialist programme" can even remotely be included in a list of decisive events of the international class struggle in the way that Hungary, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Vietnam, France and Chile can then you are indeed radically politically disoriented. This blowing up of objectively less important questions into alleged dividing lines of historical class trends, "decisive tests", and the like is of course one of the chief characteristics of sectarianism

Differences within Marxism

In reality of course such positions determine the entire conception of the character of a revolutionary party. Any serious revolutionary organisation will absolutely inevitably have differences in its ranks on such questions as British membership of the EEC, slogans such as "Labour to power on a socialist programme" and the like. Any organisation which splits over such issues, or refuses unity because of differences on them, is a mere sect in the real scientific sense.

The role of such a distortion of the real objective weight of issues in your statement is clear. By posing as "the greatest test of the international class struggle" issues which are in reality much more minor a justification is given for splits on tactics, particular issues and questions other than genuinely decisive tests for the class struggle. It is by these means that your statement, while declaring on the one hand correct criteria to determine the class character of organisations, then goes on to relapse into some of the worst aspects of traditional British sectarianism, leading to characterisation of other organisations as "centrist obstacles" etc.

We think that you should instead of this path develop the really correct first part of your statement — that is, consider the really decisive issues of the international class struggle and take your position on

the class character of organisations accordingly. By this route you will find that the IMG is genuinely, despite your particular differences with it, a **revolutionary** organisation with which you should seek to unify your forces.

The I-CL

Finally, however, we would like to point out some of the implications for your own tendency. Don't you understand, comrades, that every argument you give for declaring the IMG to be a "centrist formation" merely ensures the stagnation and splitting of your own group?

There is absolutely no way of stopping any organisation with more than a few tens of adherents (and generally not even smaller ones than that) from developing among its members tactical differences, opposed positions on particular questions etc. Such differences are an absolutely inevitable reflection of unevennesses within the working class itself. But once you declare that such inevitable differences over issues of the scale of the EEC referendum or "Labour to power on a socialist programme" constitute bases for characterising people as not revolutionaries, and justifying organisational separation of forces, then the consequences for your own organisation are clear. You educate your own people that forces holding such positions are centrists, that splits are justified over such issues, etc. As serious people they naturally put such concepts into practice.

All you are achieving by your characterisations and polemics against the IMG is to ensure the splitting, and the destruction of true internal life and democracy, of your own grouping, and its final decay and disintegration. Your concepts and methods are not a clever practical way to build a revolutionary organisation but, because they are unprincipled, are a complete obstacle to it.

The right path

Having made these somewhat harsh, but necessary points, we would also like to say something else.

While we consider that you are at present making major sectarian errors we do not believe in politics in either the theory of original sin or of immaculate conception. In a period where revolutionaries are still relatively few and weak it is absolutely inevitable that all sorts of errors and mistakes will be made. In the case of errors which are not at all those of definitive crossing of class lines, the crucial issue is frequently going to not who can avoid the errors but who draws lessons from them and who on the contrary forgets what they had once learnt. The IMG has made many sectarian and opportunist errors in the past. Unfortunately, it will doubtless do so again in the future. We strive to correct them. We hope that you will also correct your present sectarian mistakes.

Perhaps there is some chance of this occurring. In 1969, the chief of your component parts wrote:

"The tragedy of revolutionary socialism in Britain in the post-war period is that what are properly factions of one basic party have assumed the form of a hydra-headed monstrosity of division and re-division; where division leads to differing fields of work by small, small groups and the accumulated experience creates a sort of special colouration to the ideology of the group. We get sects — i.e. small groups, properly speaking factions, with highly distinct secondary characteristics which are primarily important to the groups' identities as sects."

While the definition of a sect is not quite scientific, nevertheless these are in general entirely correct words. We think the I - C L should take them to heart and proceed to act on them. On that basis we are prepared to enter into discussions on revolutionary unity with your comrades at any time.

JOHN ROSS
Member of the Political
Committee of the IMG



A REPLY

FOR COMRADE ROSS, the I-CL is sectarian because we take secondary issues [like the EEC] as proving that the IMG is centrist, that is, "politically petty-bourgeois". For some time this has been the sticking-point for discussions between the IMG and the I-CL. The IMG has protested that comradely discussions are impossible until we concede that they are a genuinely revolutionary organisation.

The problem here is that the word 'centrist' is being used in two different senses. For the IMG it describes tendencies which have definitely crossed the class line. In our view, some centrist tendencies have definitely crossed the class line; but we do not think that is true of the IMG, or the SWP. We could argue about which of us is using words more correctly. It will be more useful if we put the word to one side and discuss the substance of the matter.

We believe that the IMG suffers from "chronic political instability, a chronic tendency to seek ways of riding the wave of the 'revolutionary process' rather than mapping out an independent working-class policy" ('For Revolutionary Unity on a Revolutionary Programme', INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST, no.7). But does not add up to "a definitive break with the programme [or] adopting the standpoint of the bureaucracy" (THE I-CL AND THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL, p.26). For us, the IMG is a revolutionary organisation in the general sense, but one which persistently makes opportunist errors, often serious ones.

Deaf

Unity with the IMG is not necessarily ruled out. Nor would we see unity with the IMG as some sort of 'smash and grab raid'. We would expect to fight hard and long for our views within a unified organisation — but we do not believe that the comrades of the IMG are hardened and deaf to reason, nor are we so impatient and irresponsible that we would bolt from a unified organisation as soon as we found ourselves in a minority on a serious issue.

So when comrade Ross contrasts differences among revolutionaries to crossing class lines, we would place the bulk of the IMG's errors under the heading, 'differences among revolutionaries'. But comrade Ross's contrast is too simple.

Take the question of 'Labour to power on a socialist programme'. It is not such a small question; in our view it sums up the disorientation of many Trotskyists in relation to reformism during the '50s and '60s, which was indeed a major 'test of the international class struggle'. Still, we have had comrades in our organisation supporting the slogan 'Labour to power on a socialist programme', and we never thought of expelling them or denouncing them as centrists. (The same goes for comrades in our ranks who supported an anti-EEC line).

In those cases, the slogan 'Labour to power on a socialist programme' was a difference among revolutionaries. But it is a different question with tendencies who stick to that slogan and draw out all the logical conclusions from it. Inescapably they end up as **parliamentary reformists**, like the 'Militant' tendency. And there are many shadings and nuances between the simple, individual error, and full-blown reformism.

Logic

It is indeed the method of **sectarianism** to pick on a tendency's errors and then to hold that tendency guilty of all the treasons and betrayals which **might** flow from sticking to those errors and drawing out all the logical conclusions from them. Equally, however, it is the method of **ideological indifference** never to see anything more than an error here and an error there, short of the definitive, blatant crossing of class lines.

Both methods are an equally unsound basis for building a revolutionary party.

We chose current, live issues for mention in our statement 'For Revolutionary Unity on a Revolutionary Programme' with a view to **avoiding** sectarianism. We have our criticisms of the IMG on Chile, on France 1968, on Vietnam, on Cuba, and so on. But to the extent that those issues are still live, the **general** issues involved can be shown by reference to **current** or recent events. Otherwise we end up with the demand for 'a full discussion of all the disputed issues back to 1953', which the SLL used to put forward when unity was discussed.

No doubt comrade Ross would agree with us in rejecting that SLL approach. But then he seems to come close to defining every difference into unimportance! When we mention issues of more or less immediate and

practical importance, he says: these are just episodic tactical details. If we were to go into the major issues of the last 30 years, then we would face the charge of taking "theoretical or historical criteria (which involves an abandonment of Marxist materialism)".

Slurred

For us, unity with other revolutionaries, including the IMG, is certainly desirable. The problem for us is always to check, in every new situation, whether it is possible on a sound basis or not.

There can never be any guarantee against future problems or future splits. But light-

minded unifications, where explosive or paralyzing political differences are slurred over, are as harmful for the cause of revolutionary unity as sectarian isolation. We want discussions with the IMG to explore the possibilities of unification on a solid basis, and — if we can — to help create those possibilities. It is our hope that this exchange of views will open the door to such discussions.

MARTIN THOMAS

[Member of the Political Committee
of the I-CL].

★ We will be continuing this discussion on revolutionary unity in future issues of INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST, and welcome contributions from readers.

Archive

THE FIRST WORKING WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

CLARA ZETKIN, a leading member of the German Social Democratic and, later, Communist Parties, more than anyone else developed a socialist theory of the emancipation of women. For many years she was the editor of *Die Gleichheit*, a vital educational tool in the fight for women's liberation.

She was one of the main critics of the rightist and opportunist shift of the SPD, which eventually led them into adapting to bourgeois democracy and supporting the imperialist war.

The women's movement in Germany was split very clearly between the bourgeois and proletarian wings. The bourgeois women's movement fought only for the rights of the professional women, and were against any special provision for women in industry. Concerning themselves only with equal rights for the middle class, they did not relate to the conditions of life for working class women.

The proletarian women's movement which Clara Zetkin built was closely aligned to the SPD, both politically and organisationally. After much debate the party accepted the demand for special protection for women workers. They understood that in many cases women were forced to work in worse conditions than their male counterparts, and that special legislation was needed to protect their interests.

In a meaningful sense, in the best part of its history the social-democratic women's movement could be contrasted to the bourgeois one as a proletarian women's movement. In theory and practice in this period it was what the bourgeois women's movement wanted to appear to be: the vanguard for the complete social and human liberation and for the equality of rights of the whole female sex.

It understood the women's question in the light of historical materialism as an important part of the general social question. It therefore recognised that the contradiction between classes and the class-struggle between exploited and exploiters in the bourgeois society is of decisive importance for the complete emancipation of women. Its actions were led by the understanding of the fact that not the formal equality of the sexes in law but only the revolutionary overthrow of bourgeois society and the realisation of socialism as the act of the proletariat, freeing itself through struggle,

They also rejected the idea that because women increased competition, they should be forced out of their jobs. The Socialists, and the proletarian women's movement, came to an understanding that women could strengthen the workers' movement. Also, with an independent wage, the hold of the family and women's subordination to men would be weakened.

The gradual erosion of revolutionary work amongst women, and the trend to an exclusive focus on getting legislation through Parliament, went hand in hand with the degeneration of the SPD into a bureaucratic and reformist organisation.

At the very time that the post-war Weimar Republic was passing legislation in favour of women's legal and political rights, they were being forced out of the workforce because of the state of the economy and the workers' movement's inability to fight for its independent interests.

In the extract printed here, dated 1928, Clara Zetkin describes the history of the social-democratic women's movement.

PAT MACLEAN

(From *Zur Geschichte der proletarischen Frauenbewegung Deutschlands*, Verlag Roter Stern, 1971. Translated by Stan Crook).

would bring all women a humanity which could fully flourish and develop.

Unlike the bourgeois movement for equality for women the proletarian women's movement, as a result of its basic position, did not call upon the women of all classes and sections of society to take part in a common struggle of sex against sex for a reform of society which would put an end to the privileges of the male. Rather it collected, organised and schooled above all the proletarian women for the struggle, alongside of their brothers.

However it also called upon the oppressed and exploited women of all sections of society to join together with the proletariat in the struggle of class against class, for the overturn of the bourgeois order by the ending of the private ownership of the means of production.

The social-democratic women's movement has lost the honour of being, in doctrine and deed, a proletarian women's movement.

Because of its aim and content it is today merely a reformist movement, a particular type of the bourgeois movement for women's equality, a particular sort of bourgeois democracy. It flourished together with the Second International, and, in step with it and its betrayal of the proletariat, it has sunk from one level to another since the outbreak of the imperialist world war in 1914.

The movement of the women of the proletariat and of the bourgeoisie for their emancipation has the same bases: the destruction of the old domestic activity of the woman in the family by the capitalist mode of production. Beyond that however the class contradiction between women in bourgeois society makes itself felt.

The lack of property makes productive gainful labour a question of existence for the proletarian woman, indeed for the proletarian family. As a result of the modern means of production and conditions of production connected with factories, economic changes create a wide and growing field of such labour in the society. The drive for surplus value, for profit, which is the soul of capitalism, whips masses of proletarian women into the factory under the compulsion of need. The profitable use of voluntary female labour which is both cheap and becoming cheaper because of the pressure on wages is not only a consequential phenomenon of the spread of capitalism, it is at the same time a prerequisite of its growth.

Blame

Wage earning labour in society dissolves for the proletarian woman the economic dependence on the male and makes her equal to him as someone able to support herself. But her sexual slavery as a woman still chains her to him judicially, legally. Moreover she must pay a dear price for her economic independence: the most merciless effects of proletarian class-slavery. And not only must she alone pay this price. The male proletarian pays too, in the form of sinking wages and being forced out of the factory; the proletarian child with inadequate care and attention, with suffering and death; the whole working class with increasing impoverishment.

The workers whom the doctrines of scientific socialism have not yet taught to see clearly, confuse effect and cause. For this harsher distress, they blame the labour of the most severely exploited, instead of the social regime of capitalist exploitation. They struggle against industrial, gainful women's work and demand its legal banning. The struggle of the sexes flares up even in the world of the proletariat around a demand, the realisation of which would throw back the woman into her ancient dependence of the man.

A lack of freedom because of her sex and a slavery because of her class, closely interwined form the proletarian women's existence, which is weighed down with suffering.

The ideas of the utopian socialists Owen, Saint-Simon, Fourier and their pupils kindled the light of hope in this darkness. The proletarian women who awoke to a consciousness of their humanity and to a longing for freedom, looked for their liberation from all evils in a new ideal construction of society of equality, liberty and fraternity. They gradually formed groups, including also bourgeois women, which defended themselves against the banning of female labour and demanded an improvement of the working and living conditions of female workers.

They allied with those who shared these ideas - men and women - in order to propagandise and take action for the construction of the utopian, dreamed-for society.

They were however still very far from recognising the fact that capitalism produces the objective prerequisites of the new order, which frees both women and humanity, in the womb of the bourgeois society, and that this new order must be realised by the common revolutionary class struggle of the men and women of the proletariat.

The initial beginnings of the struggle for emancipation by proletarian women were thus anything but principled, clearly socialist, social-democratic. They represented a conglomeration and confusion of various tendencies and demands: some limited to calling for equality for women, some utopian, others social-revolutionary or social-reformist. Nationally, and all the more internationally, they did without a firm organised structure. In England, France, Germany, the United States of North America and elsewhere there appeared new features of one kind, now features of another kind: now more economic, now political slogans.

Generally decisive for this was — in the given historical conditions of the different countries — the on-going development of capitalist production and its effect on the class contradiction between bourgeoisie and proletariat, on the retrogression of bourgeois democracy, on the progress of the proletariat in knowledge, organisation and fighting strength as a revolutionary class. In the course of this historical process of maturation feminist ideas and currents among the proletarian women, who were demanding freedom and equal rights, were outstripped by the demands of the class struggle; the proletarian women fought their way to a recognition of the fact that the liberation-struggle of the class would not be led to victory without the conscious and

devoted participation of women who enjoyed equal rights and equal esteem.

In a leading, exemplary role the First International went ahead of the proletariat in the struggle for the complete emancipation of the whole female sex. Its congress in Geneva, 1866, decisively rejected the moves for the legal banning of industrial female labour, which guild-minded English trade unions were demanding from the right, and anarchist, Proudhonists and their like were demanding from the left. Decisive for this was a portrayal of the problem — by Marx himself — which, corresponding to dialectical materialism, showed the worldwide revolutionary meaning of industrial female labour and demanded comprehensive legal protection against exploitation and oppression, to deal with its reactionary effects which worsened the class-position of the proletariat in the social order of capitalism. Like the resolution about trade unions it showed the necessity of common class struggle of male and female proletarians for the overthrow of the slavery and exploitation of capitalism.

Unions

In the General Council of the First International there was one woman, with responsibility for the women-workers trade organisations: the unions of shoe-factory workers in England and of silk-workers in Lyon. With great energy and considerable success the International Workers' organisation of the fighting working-class enthused and gave leadership to many women workers and petit bourgeois, who in the defence of the Paris Commune had proved as heroines and martyrs their claim to equal consideration and equal rights with the men.

In Germany, even before the great internationally explosive and exemplary event of the seizure of power by the proletariat, there had ensued the first common, organised advance of female and male proletarians under the sign of socialism in struggle against capitalism. The trade-co-operative of industrial, factory and hand-workers was founded in Crimmitchau, a forerunner of the union of textile workers which declared its allegiance to the principles of the International Workers' Association.

The First International collapsed as an organisational form, but its rich historical content lived on in the revolutionary understanding of the women's question, and won more and more supporters, both male and female. The founding congress of the Second International in Paris, 1889, proved this. One of the two representatives of

German unions of women workers opposed on behalf of the German delegation a ban on women's work, rejected the bourgeois demands for equality for women, and demanded the integration of female proletarians into the ranks of the fighting proletariat. The congress showed its solidarity with this conception by stormy applause, but did not reach any resolution on this question binding both parties and trade unions.

This was characteristic of the behaviour of the Second International on the question. The Second International renounced the initiative and leadership, it renounced linking ideologically and organisationally the struggle of the proletariat, it renounced making this struggle an indispensable active and driving force of social revolution. It left the solving of this important task to the female followers of socialism themselves.

In all capitalist countries, with a growing maturity of theoretical understanding and immeasurable and devoted fervour, these followers set about clearing up the confusion of bourgeois-feminist, social-reformist and socialist ideas, overcoming the complete lack of unity of the many organisational forms and turning the changing movement of proletarian women into a principled, practically effective and decidedly socialist women's movement. The female social-democrats of Germany were in the forefront of this movement, pointing the way and providing an example.

The social democratic women's movement strengthened its equal value as a part of the revolutionary proletarian struggle for liberation by its clear demarcation in theory and practice from the feminist demands for equality and bourgeois reformism. The discussions necessary for this took place on the whole front of the women's question as a social question, which can only be solved by the proletarian revolution and proletarian dictatorship, opening the way to socialism.

First and foremost they concentrated on the basic and practical attitude to legal protection for women workers. The Congress of the Second International in Zurich, 1893, took up a position against the strong feminist tendencies in accordance with the Marxist perspective. More important and more far-reaching was the struggle for the basic and tactical position vis-a-vis the enfranchisement of women. Should the championing of a 'vote for ladies' be allowed, the renunciation of the demand for the general enfranchisement of women in proletarian struggles for the right to vote, or the feminist equating of the political enfranchisement of women with the complete social liberation of the

female sex?

The solving of these disputed questions became a passionate struggle against reformism, against opportunism along the whole front. The initiative and toughness of the most progressive members of the social-democratic womens' movement led to the result that this struggle ended at the Congress of the Second International at Stuttgart in 1907 with the victory of revolutionary Marxism. In its best times the social democratic womens' movement was a valuable force of the "left wing" of the social democratic parties of the Second International in their struggle against opportunism and revisionism

Faithful to its conception of the unified organisation of the exploited, no matter what their sex, it led the women workers to the trade union of their brothers in the workplace, it led the proletarian women of every section of society to the socialist party of their country. On the basis thus created the social democratic women's movement set about its international unification in the framework of, and in closest connection with the Second International. The first international conference of socialist women in Stuttgart, 1907, decided to make "Gleichheit" ("Equality"), the woman's paper of German Social-democracy, the international organ, and elected an International Secretary.

The second international conference of socialist women in Copenhagen in 1910 decided to make the annual Woman's Day a united international action. Linked to contemporary demands of proletarian women, for example the enfranchisement of women, it should be a revolutionary action of proletarian women and men against bourgeois society.

The imperialist bloodbath showed that the worm of reformism had also gnawed away at the social democratic women's movement which had appeared to promise so much. It still showed one powerful revolutionary sign of life: the international socialist women's conference in Bern, 1915. From the proletarian class position it called upon women to rise up in struggle against the betrayal of the international solidarity of the proletariat of all countries by the majority of the social democratic parties and trade unions, to rise up in struggle for peace between peoples as a prerequisite of the unleashing of the sharpest revolutionary advance of the proletarian masses to the overthrow of bourgeois society.

The conference was the action of a minority of the movement, it presaged the inevitable split. Under the leadership of the Second International the great majority of the organised social-democratic women degenerated

into defenders of the national "parties" of the imperialist bourgeoisie. They competed with the bourgeois ladies in chauvinist attitudes and activity. They deceived and swindled the proletarian women about the goal and character of the imperialist struggle for power and thus drove them into the trenches of the economy and all areas of social life. Unenlightened by the violent world-wide storm of the proletarian revolution in the tsarist empire the female social democrats continued to help the bourgeoisie protect its class-rule against the stormy, revolutionary advance of the exploited.

The honourable past throws a bright light on how far the social democratic women's movement has sunk. It has degenerated into a nothing-but-reforms movement which does not want to overthrow the bourgeois order but support it. It contributes to strengthening, to preserving the class slavery of proletarian women.

Petty

Certainly, in the social democratic women's movement there is still talk about socialism, but only for the purpose of holding back working women from the revolutionary struggle of their class. It does not lead proletarian women along the only road to socialism, to the communist world-order, to the revolutionary conquest of state-power. It lulls these women, who are doubly victim of capitalism, with the dream of a "peaceful evolution into socialism" by means of social reforms and bourgeois democracy. Even as far as reforms and democracy are concerned, it cons working women with the illusion that these "achievements" are the fruits of cooperation between classes and of peace between them, rather than the results of the bitter, stubborn, proletarian class-struggle. By giving up the basic goal — the proletarian revolution — it renders itself incapable of representing the present demands of proletarian women.

Especially characteristic for all this are the international social democratic women's conferences which took place in Marseilles (1925) and in Brussels (1926 and 1928) under the aegis of the Second International which had again been patched together. In the questions of legal protection for women workers, of protection and social provision for mother and child, and for people in need of any kind these conferences fell back to the petty demands of the Washington Conference (1919). So far they remain unratified by the admired coalition governments of the great capitalist states and the Labour

government in England, and the social democratic women gently pray for their realisation as a "humanitarian human right". Ms Bondfield, the Minister of Labour in the English Labour Government, shows the value of such an attitude by her plans for laws and suggestions for establishing order in unemployment benefits and labour relationships in the mining industry; by her attitude to the great struggle in the wool industry in which many tens of thousands of women workers are exploited and enslaved.

The international conferences of social democratic women evaluated the enfranchisement of women in a purely feminist way as a completed human right of women. Nonetheless the conference participants were ready to make do with a "ladies' enfranchisement" and cravenly hesitated and wavered even in calling to order the reformist Labour Party of Belgium for the fact that, as a result of their alliance with the liberals, its representative in the Chamber had voted against the enfranchisement of women which had been proposed by the Clerical Party.

Lies

Shameless to the greatest degree is the behaviour of social-democratic women with regard to the threatening danger of imperialist wars. In Marseilles they failed to back a demand for the condemnation of those brutally bloody Morocco war of the French imperialists because this war had not been opposed by the reformist socialists of France. On the other hand they whipped up feelings against the alleged "red imperialism" of the Soviet Union and comforted the women proletarian longing for peace with the hope of the "mothers' ballot paper".

The social democratic women's movement is a birth-place of the illusions about the ability to achieve peace of the League of Nations, the international disarmament conferences of the capitalist governments, and every attempt to swindle the masses connected with them. It is likewise a birthplace of all the lies and calumnies about the first state of the proletarian dictatorship and its construction of socialism.

On the other hand it remains silent in all languages about the serious policies of this state aimed at peace and about its exemplary work for the complete human liberation of the women by the soviet constitution and the formation of economic and social forms of life which raise the equality of rights to a truth and to a fact. Nor can it show any act of international solidarity with the liberation struggles of the colonial and semi-col-

onial peoples against imperialism; struggles in which female workers, female peasants, female petty bourgeois, female intellectuals have played a magnificent and self-sacrificing role.

The social democratic women's movement is embourgeoisified. It is distinguished from feminism in the competition for supporters who believe in the movement only by its phraseology, not by its nature. It no longer goes on in advance of the political parties and trade unions with which it is linked in solving problems of the women's question, in stimulating and enriching practise. It is the servant girl of these organisation in the service of the 'grande bourgeoisie'. There is no shameful, anti-working class deed of coalition politics, of industrial peace with the tolerating of which does not dull the class consciousness of proletarian women and put to sleep their frightening energy, in the name of "reason of state" and the "national economy".

In spite of its inner decay the social democratic women's movement has a strong and ascending external development. According to the Brussels Congress of the Socialist Women Workers International (1928), 915,000 women were organised in the parties which were members of it, and the reformist tradeunions had 1,687,000 female members. Since then these figures have been by far outstripped.

The social democratic women's movement is no longer, as it once was, scorned by "public opinion", pursued by the authorities; on both sides it enjoys powerful support. In the countries with coalition governments — also those where the enfranchisement of women exists — it becomes rooted in the masses of proletarian women by means of important positions in the state apparatus, in the communal administration, in social insurance, and in welfare provision.

Experienced and skilled propagandists and organisers work for this movement, misusing their previously gained trust, as well as their whole knowledge of the position and psychology of working women, in order to deceive them and lead them by the nose, feeding and strengthening their anti-revolutionary lack of confidence and their fear of revolution. They do this at the time when they have before their eyes the merciless rule of monopoly capital, imperialism lusting for loot, the beginning of the proletarian revolution, the immortal example of the women in the Soviet Union: revolutionary fighters and socialist constructors.

In order for the proletarian revolution to liberate women and overthrow capitalism, it must destroy reformism in the working class...

A classic of revolutionary history

ALBERT SOBLOUL: "THE FRENCH REVOLUTION 1787-1799" [2 volumes, New Left Books, 1974]. Reviewed by IAN GARIOCH.

THE FRENCH Revolution was an event of fundamental importance in world history in that it ushered in a period of bourgeois revolution and the eventual triumph of capitalism throughout Europe. It has come to be thought of as the classic bourgeois revolution.

Albert Soboul's two-volume work also merits the status of a classic. First published in French in 1962, the work incorporates the results of recent research on the revolution, especially that carried out by Soboul himself on the sans-culottes.

Soboul's work has the merit of focusing on the interests and objectives of the various social classes involved; this approach enables him to explain the succeeding changes of regime in France by reference to the inner contradictions of the policies of the differing factions, parties and classes that rose and fell in the space of a dozen years before Napoleon cut short the proceedings and imposed his own dictatorial rule. Soboul discusses also the international significance of the revolution, comparing it in particular with the English civil war and the American revolutionary war of independence. Soboul distinguishes three political currents issuing from the revolution, namely, bourgeois liberalism, social-democracy (which he links with the views of the Jacobins) and revolutionary communism (personified by Babeuf).

Following a thorough analysis of the crisis of French absolutism in the second half of the eighteenth century, which came to a head with the financial crisis of 1787, Soboul begins his narrative with the "revolt of the aristocracy" that prefaced the upheavals of 1789. The aristocrats were determined not to pay the bill for the monarchy, but the mass of the people, the so-called Third Estate (third, after the nobles and the clergy) were equally determined, and wished to seize the opportunity created by the crisis in order to push through much-needed reforms. The King could have chosen to become a constitutional monarch by siding with the Third Estate, but refused to do so, since, explains Soboul, this would have led to his abdicating all authority and destroying the entire social structure of the Ancien Régime. "The natural ally of the aristocracy, the King quickly allowed himself to be drawn into the conflict on the side of those resisting the demands of the Third".

This relationship of forces explains the basic line of development of events from 1789 onwards. There was one vital additional factor, however — the French people themselves. When the Paris masses rose, armed themselves, and stormed the Bastille, they touched off a wave of peasant risings all over the country, and their example was followed by many of the provincial towns. Once having stepped onto the political stage the masses refused to be driven from it. The representatives of the bourgeoisie, especially the more conciliatory Girondin party, which hoped to win over the king, tried to put a break on the revolution and, attempting to further their own interests, forced France into a European war in 1792. They lost out, however. The war demanded the total mobilisation of the country's resources and the opening of power to the popular masses, the sans-culottes (literally those "without breeches", i.e. not dressed after the manner of the rich). This involved a partial attack on the free market economy beloved of the bourgeois.

Also involved were extreme disciplinary measures against the enemies of the revolution — the Terror. The left wing of the bourgeoisie, politicians such as Marat, Robespierre, and Saint-Just, representing "the middle bourgeoisie and the popular classes of society, artisans and shopkeepers, the consumers who were suffering from the high cost of living, unemployment,

and the inadequate level of wages", pressed for vigorous measures and won over the convention. The King was executed. Power began to be concentrated in the hands of the revolutionary Committee of Public Safety. Maximum prices were decreed. Following the insurrection of May 31st 1792 the Girondins were purged from the Convention.

Soboul's analysis of the relationship between the Jacobin bourgeois politicians and the sans-culotte masses is possibly the most interesting part of the whole work. It is this part of the story which is missing from the works of that other great authority on the revolution, Georges Lefebvre. As Soboul points out, "It was thanks to the sans-culottes of Paris that the Montagne (the Jacobin party) had triumphed over the Gironde, but the Montagnards had no intention of giving in to their pressure". The so-called Enragés were a political force issuing from the sans-culottes themselves, and one or two left-wing Montagnards such as Hébert and Chaumette adopted their programme, but Robespierre, the central figure of the Jacobin government, was firmly opposed to their policies. Arrests of Enragés began.

Nonetheless, much of the mystique of the revolution dates from this period (1792-94), however, including the Republican calendar with its twelve 30-day months: vendémiaire, brumaire, frimaire, nivôse, pluviôse, ventôse, germinal, floreal, prairial, messidor, thermidor, and fructidor.

De-christianisation was another sans-culotte goal. It is significant that Robespierre, despite his propagation of the "Cult of the Supreme Being" as a substitute for Catholicism, was against the more extreme manifestations of the anti-clerical spirit.

The Jacobin dictatorship checked the advance of the counter-revolution both at home and abroad, but its very success led to the renewal of the "right danger", exemplified by Danton and the so-called "Indulgents", those who wished for a relaxation of the terror. The factional struggle which ensued surfaced in the "crisis of Ventôse" (March-April 1794) and the guillotining of the principal Indulgents and also Hébertists. The Commune of Paris was purged, and popular societies dissolved. Altogether throughout the country some 40,000 people perished in the terror, of which Soboul estimates that 28% were peasants and 31% sans-culottes, as against 8.5% nobles and 6.5% clergy. (So much for the Scarlet Pimpernel!)

The Jacobin dictatorship fell because it failed to satisfy either the bourgeois, who were demanding a relaxation of controls of all kinds now that the war was going France's way, or the sans-culottes, who wanted the enforcement of price controls — violations of the maximum were allowed on all foodstuffs except bread — and the retention of the dictatorship. Robespierre and his friends lost control of the convention, which reasserted itself against the Committee of Public Safety. A half-cock insurrection by the Paris Commune was crushed, partly because the Montagnard leaders refused to put themselves at the head of the movement. Thus occurred the recovery of power by the right wing of the bourgeoisie in the coup of the 9th Thermidor.

Despite the immediate relaxation of economic controls and a "get rich quick" atmosphere which developed, together with gangs of right-wing youths bent on hunting down Jacobins and sans-culottes, the economic crisis continued. Inflation impelled the popular masses to stage their last desperate attempts to halt the reactionary tide, the 'journées' (uprisings) of Germinal and Prairial, Year III (April-May 1795). The Paris masses came onto the streets demanding "Bread and the Constitution of 1793!" But their action was isolated, and the army held aloof. They were defeated.

It was Babeuf who drew the logical conclusion from all this. Because the revolutionary bourgeoisie had tried to control the economy but had done it in the interests of themselves alone, the masses must needs break with capitalism altogether if they wished to solve the political problems facing them. This insight led him to organise the so-called "Conspiracy of Equals" in the autumn of 1796, an attempted putsch by an underground organisation, which makes him a forerunner of Blanqui. Socially he was in advance of his time, and in any case the plan was forestalled by police action before it could be tested.

This was virtually the left's last throw. Bourgeois rule in France now ran its course unchecked. In Bonaparte's Italian campaign plunder-seeking played a bigger role than ever, though alongside revolutionary clearing-away of feudal remnants. In France, royalist sentiments surged back in popularity. The only force able to stop this development (and prevent a revival of Jacobinism) was the army, and the elevation of Bonaparte the logical result.

The triumph of bourgeois liberalism, the ideal of the "men of '89" was thus delayed by some thirty years. Economically this system was one of pure laissez-faire. The approach of social-democracy (of the Labour Party variety) which seeks in practice to modify the pure operation of the capitalist economy, stems, according to Soboul, from the Jacobins, while clearly the fully developed system of Marx is prefigured in the utopian-elitist conceptions of Babeuf, who wished to go "beyond the ideas of the old state of affairs". Soboul uses the

philosophical and political insights of Marx to interpret and evaluate the great French Revolution, illustrating thereby the truth of Marx's dictum that "the anatomy of man is the key to the anatomy of the ape".

The making of CAPITAL

'THE MAKING OF MARX'S CAPITAL', by Roman Rosdolsky. Pluto Press, 1977: £18. Reviewed by Martin Thomas.

MARX's major economic studies were carried out in the 1850s, and it was in that period that he worked out most of the basic ideas of "Capital", including the theory of surplus value.

The 1857 crisis spurred Marx on to bring his work to a conclusion. In the winter of 1857-58 he wrote a long *Rough Draft of his Critique of Political Economy*. Only a small part of his work was brought to the stage of being published at that time: the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), covering much the same ground as part 1 of *Capital* volume 1.

In the 1860s Marx set about writing up his work once again. It was from manuscripts of this period that Marx prepared *Volume 1 of Capital*, and Engels and Kautsky (after Marx's death) the remaining volumes.

The young Kautsky once suggested to the old Marx that the time had come to publish Marx's complete works. Marx commented wryly: "They would first have to be written." In fact, the bulk of Marx's later writings are uncompleted works. Among those uncompleted works, the *Rough Draft [Grundrisse]* of 1857-58 is of major importance. It was almost unknown until the 1950s (*), and the first English translation appeared in 1973 (by Martin Nicolaus, published by Penguin). More recently Pluto Press has published an English translation of Roman

* An edition was published in East Berlin in 1953; the previous 1939-41 Moscow edition was very rare indeed.

Rosdolsky's commentary on the *Grundrisse*.

Rosdolsky, an old Trotskyist, had withdrawn from political activity by the time he wrote this commentary, but he retained his anti-Stalinist revolutionary ideas. His is a work of a higher order than the academic commentaries on Marx. Marx's uncompleted works have suffered too much from the attentions of professors blind to their revolutionary purpose, who generally seize on one or another notebook or fragment in order to proclaim that this manuscript (as interpreted by Professor X) shows the essence of Marx's ideas much more clearly than the works Marx himself published. The 1844 Manuscripts have been treated thus by many authors, the *Marginal Notes on Wagner* by Louis Althusser, and the *Grundrisse* by David McLellan.

Notebook

Rosdolsky's book is not concerned with spinning out this or that pet "interpretation", but with a critical analysis of the substantive content of the *Grundrisse*, placing it firmly in the context of Marx's other major works and of later Marxist debate. It is, in fact, a wide-ranging notebook on issues in the *Grundrisse*, with extensive critical comments on the work of many major Marxist economists: Luxemburg, Bukharin, Hilferding, Bauer, Lenin, the 'Legal Marxists', Grossman, Sweezy, Lange — and on the critiques of Marx by Böhm-Bawerk and Joan Robinson.

Rosdolsky shows that although the *Grundrisse* generally (apart from some digressions) covers a narrower field than *Capital*, and contains a number of mistakes corrected in the later work, it throws additional light on several problems. But the *Grundrisse*

is most important, in Rosdolsky's opinion, for the insight it gives into Marx's method of working. It "introduced us, as it were, to Marx's economic laboratory, and laid bare all the fine details and complex byways of his methodology... one no longer has to bite into the sour apple and 'thoroughly study the whole of Hegel's Logic' (as Lenin insisted) in order to understand Marx's *Capital* — one can arrive at the same end, directly, by studying the *Rough Draft*" (p.570).

For example, in the *Grundrisse* the method of argument by which Marx arrived at his analysis of surplus-value is expounded much more fully than in *Capital*, and the dialectical nature of the argument is much more obvious.

Another example of the importance of the question of method concerns the "schemas of reproduction" in *Volume 2 of Capital*. In *Volume 1 of Capital* Marx showed how surplus value is produced within the apparently free and equal economic relations of capitalism. In *Volume 2* he started to look at the problems of realising that surplus value on the market. He divided the economy into two major "Departments" — Department 1, production of means of production (machinery, raw materials); Department 2, production of consumer goods. In each Department the value of the total yearly product could be divided into three segments: C (value transferred to the product from machinery and raw materials), V (representing necessary labour-time consumed, i.e. that part of labour-time which finds an equivalent in the wages paid out), and S (representing surplus labour-time consumed). With the aid of numerical examples, Marx showed that definite proportions had to hold between those portions of value.

These schemes are not in-

tended to show how capitalism actually functions. They are a stage in the analysis, leaving out for the time being some factors which are crucial for the practical details of the capitalist cycle: technical progress, replacement of workers by machinery, and the tendencies for the rate of exploitation (S/V) to rise and the rate of profit to fall.

In *Capital* Marx's analysis proceeds from essence to appearance. "Essence" and "appearance" do not mean the same thing here as they do in common-sense usage. The "appearance" is not just an illusion, and the "essence" is not just the reality minus a few details.

Everyday events in nature do not directly reflect the essential laws of the natural sciences; yet that does not mean those everyday events are merely illusory. What is illusory is thinking which 'holds fast to appearances, and considers them as the ultimate'.

Scheme

Likewise, capital enriches itself essentially by appropriating unpaid labour-time. But in the actual workings of the capitalist market, profit (the form of appearance of surplus-value) necessarily appears to flow equally from all parts of capital, whether they have been laid out on wages, on machinery, or on raw materials. And that appearance too is not just an illusion: the profit of each capitalist is proportional (as Marx shows in *Volume 3 of Capital*) not to the sum he has laid out in wages but to his total capital.

Rosdolsky argues that many Marxists ignored the complexities of Marx's methods, and used the schemes in *Volume 2* as if they represented capitalist reality in all but a few details. Thus the Austro-Marxists and the Legal Marxists used the fact that the schemes balanced neatly to "prove" that capitalism could develop harmoniously; conversely Rosa Luxemburg concluded from the fact that capitalism didn't develop harmoniously that the neatly-balancing schemes were faulty. Bukharin even deduced faulty economic theorems from accidental relations among the clumsily-chosen figures in Marx's numerical examples (*).

* As Engels points out in the Preface to *Volume 3 of Capital*, Marx was not very skilful at arithmetic. Consequently, the numerical examples in his economic

The most extreme example was the Russian Legal Marxist Tugan-Baranovsky. Like the other Legal Marxists, Tugan was concerned to disprove the argument, advanced by Populists in the late 19th century, that capitalism could not develop in Russia because of the limitations of the consumer market. He constructed a model of capitalism developing simply by producing more and more machines, while every other sector of the economy remained static. The fact that this model fitted in with the schemes in *Volume 2* (which it does) proved to his mind that it was a possible course of development! (*)

Rosdolsky discusses the debate on the development of capitalism in Russia — a debate reviewed by Stan Lomax in *International Communist No. 4* — and argues that Lenin, especially in his earliest writings, "bent the stick" too much against the Populists and gave too much ground to the Legal Marxists. According to Rosdolsky, Lenin at times came close to saying that the size of the internal consumer market was not a serious obstacle to capital growth, and was a factor making for crises only in so far as it contributed to the development of disproportionality between the different Departments of production. Rosdolsky quotes Plekhanov, criticising Lenin on this point: "I never subscribed to those theories of the market in general, and of crises in particular which overcame our Legal Marxist literature like an epidemic in the nineties. According to this theory, whose chief protagonist can be regarded as Tugan-Baranovsky, reproduction has no barriers, and crises are simply explained by the disproportion of the means of production... Apart from Tugan-Baranovsky the theory is also propagated by V. Lenin..."

In discussing the theory of crisis generally Rosdolsky puts a heavy — perhaps too heavy — emphasis on capitalism's drive to limit and force down workers' consumption as a factor making for crisis. Against those who, in Rosdolsky's view, falsely base the theory of crisis on 'disproportionality', he repeatedly cites the well-known passage

writings have been an endless source of confusions for Marxists who allow themselves to be overawed by figures, schemes, and formulas.

from *Volume 3 of Capital*: "The ultimate reason for all real crises always remains the poverty and restricted consumption of the masses as opposed to the drive of capitalist production to develop the productive forces as though only the absolute consuming power of society constituted their limit" (p.484)

Relative

He also quotes Marx taking up "economists who deny over-production of commodities, admitting over-production of capital. To say that there is no general over-production, but rather a disproportion within the various branches of production, is no more than to say that under capitalist production the proportionality of the individual branches of production springs as a continual process from disproportionality, because the cohesion of the aggregate production imposes itself as a blind law upon the agents of production, and not as a law which, being understood and hence controlled by their common mind, brings the productive process under their joint control. It amounts furthermore to demanding that countries in which capitalist production is not developed, should consume and produce at a rate which suits the countries with capitalist production. If it is said that over-production is only relative, this is quite correct; but the entire capitalist mode of production is only a relative one..." (*Volume 3*, p.256-7).

These arguments are certainly sufficient to refute the idea that a general excess of

* A similar method of 'proving' economic theories by mathematical juggling can be found more recently among the theorists of the Permanent Arms Economy. Having found a formula for the rate of profit (in price terms) which does not involve the organic composition of capital (C/V) in the arms production sector, they conclude that arms production provides a 'drain' for capital which offsets the falling tendency of the rate of profit. They overlook the fact that mathematical independence does not necessarily mean independence in the real world, and that their formula is in any case derived from simple reproduction! See P.Semp, *The Permanent Arms Economy*, in *Permanent Revolution* no.1.

production over effective consumption is impossible ("Say's Law") and that crises arise only because production is not distributed between the different departments (consumer goods, means of production, raw materials, etc.) in the right harmonious proportions. But Rosdolsky does not give a rounded exposition of the theory of crisis as he understands it; his polemics against Lenin and other Marxists are thus unconvincing, and his argument appears one-sided. He fails to cite or take account of the passage in Volume 2 of *Capital* where Marx makes an essential qualification to the remark, cited above, about "the poverty and restricted consumption of the masses" as the "ultimate reason for all real crises".

Evil

"It is sheer tautology to say that crises are caused by the scarcity of effective consumption, or of effective consumers. The capitalist system does not know any other modes of consumption than effective ones, except that of sub forma pauperis or of the swindler. That commodities are unsaleable means only that no effective purchasers have been found for them... But if one were to attempt to give this tautology the semblance of a profounder justification by saying that the working class receives too small a portion of its own product and the evil would be remedied as soon as it receives a larger share of it and wages rise in consequence, one could only remark that crises are always prepared by precisely a period in which wages rise generally... From the point of view of these advocates of sound and 'simple' common sense, such a period should remove the crisis. It appears, then, that capitalist production comprises conditions independent of good or bad will, conditions which permit the working class to enjoy that relative prosperity only momentarily, and at that always as a harbinger of a coming crisis" (Volume 2, p. 414).

Rosdolsky's methodological argument about the place of the schemes of reproduction in Marx's theory is, however, convincing. It is one of the contributions of Rosdolsky drawn on by Ernest Mandel in his *Late Capitalism* (chapter 1). Another valuable con-

tribution of Rosdolsky's, also taken up by Mandel (*Marxist Economic Theory*, volume 1, p. 150 et seq.; *The Formation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx*, chapter 9) is the theory of wages.

In the Communist Manifesto Marx and Engels implied that capitalism would necessarily force down wages to the lowest level of physical subsistence. Frequently Marx has been attacked by bourgeois apologists, and defended by vulgar-Marxists, as if that was his last word on the question.

Rosdolsky shows, however, that Marx's mature thought on this question is better represented by these passages from *Capital*, Volume 1: "A rise in the price of labour, as a consequence of the accumulation of capital, only means, in fact, that the length and weight of the golden chain the wage-worker has already forged for himself, allow of a relaxation of the tension of it" (p. 618); "within the capitalist system all methods of raising the social productiveness of labour are brought about at the cost of the individual labourer; all means for the development of production transform themselves into means of domination over, and exploitation of, the producers;... in proportion as capital accumulates, the lot of the labourer, be his payment high or low, must grow worse" (p. 645).

In *Theories of Surplus Value* (quoted by Rosdolsky, p. 289) Marx states that "the workers themselves, although they cannot prevent reductions in real wages (resulting from increases in productivity), will not permit them to be reduced to the absolute minimum; on the contrary, they achieve a certain quantitative participation in the general growth of wealth". If the rate of exploitation is 200% today in Britain, then average wages correspond to about 14 hours labour-time per week — much less than the 30 hours labour-time which might be represented by average wages a hundred years ago on the basis of a rate of exploitation of 100%. But 14 hours labour-time today corresponds to a much greater mass of goods than 30 hours labour-time a hundred years ago.

Rosdolsky argues that the appearance of a doctrine of increasing absolute poverty in Marx's and Engels' theories arises from the fact that wages were relatively stagnant between the 1840s and

1860s — and Marx and Engels, as revolutionaries, were not and could not be specially concerned to stress the theoretical possibility of a rise in wages. He also shows that there is a tendency in capitalism to maintain a permanent pool of absolute poverty, which becomes very large in certain periods (crises) and in certain areas (the 'third world'), and to relative reinforcement of the domination of Capital over the working class.

But — as Rosdolsky emphasises — the revolutionary Marxist critique of capitalism is not based on this or that dogma about the low level of workers' subsistence, but on a comprehensive, all-sided understanding and indictment of capitalism as a social and economic system.

One of Rosdolsky's chief themes is the reassertion, against Stalinism, of the prospects of human liberation opened up by socialism. The *Grundrisse* says more on this than *Capital*.

Capitalism creates social production and widespread social intercourse. It develops varied and expanded human needs. And "capital... — quite unintentionally — reduces human labour, expenditure of energy, to a minimum. This will redound to the benefit of emancipated labour, and is the condition of its emancipation" (*Grundrisse*, p. 701).

Free

On this foundation, socialism will radically change the character of human wealth and human activity. "The theft of alien labour-time, on which the present wealth is based, appears as a miserable foundation in face of this new one; created by large-scale industry itself". "But free time, disposable time, is wealth itself, partly for the enjoyment of the product, partly for free activity which — unlike labour — is not dominated by the pressure of an extraneous purpose which must be fulfilled, and the fulfillment of which is regarded as a natural necessity or a social duty, according to one's inclination". The present-day division of work and leisure will be broken down: "It goes without saying, by the way, that direct labour-time itself cannot remain in the abstract antithesis to free time in which it appears from the

perspective of bourgeois economy". (Grundrisse, p.705; *Theories of Surplus Value*, III, p.27; Grundrisse, p.712).

Rosdolsky denounces the Stalinist apologists who want to keep exchange-value, and many other economic categories of capitalism, as features of socialism too: "If today numerous economists in the Soviet bloc elevate the law of value to the ranks of a socialist principle of distribution, this shows not only the extent of the theoretical gulf between them and Preobrazhensky and his contemporaries but also how far social and economic relations in the Soviet Union have become separated from the original aims of the October Revolution of 1917" (Rosdolsky, p.435). He also carefully expounds Marx's exhaustive critique of the socialist doctrines of Proudhon, pointing out the parallels between Proudhonism and later attempts to construct models of socialism within the basic

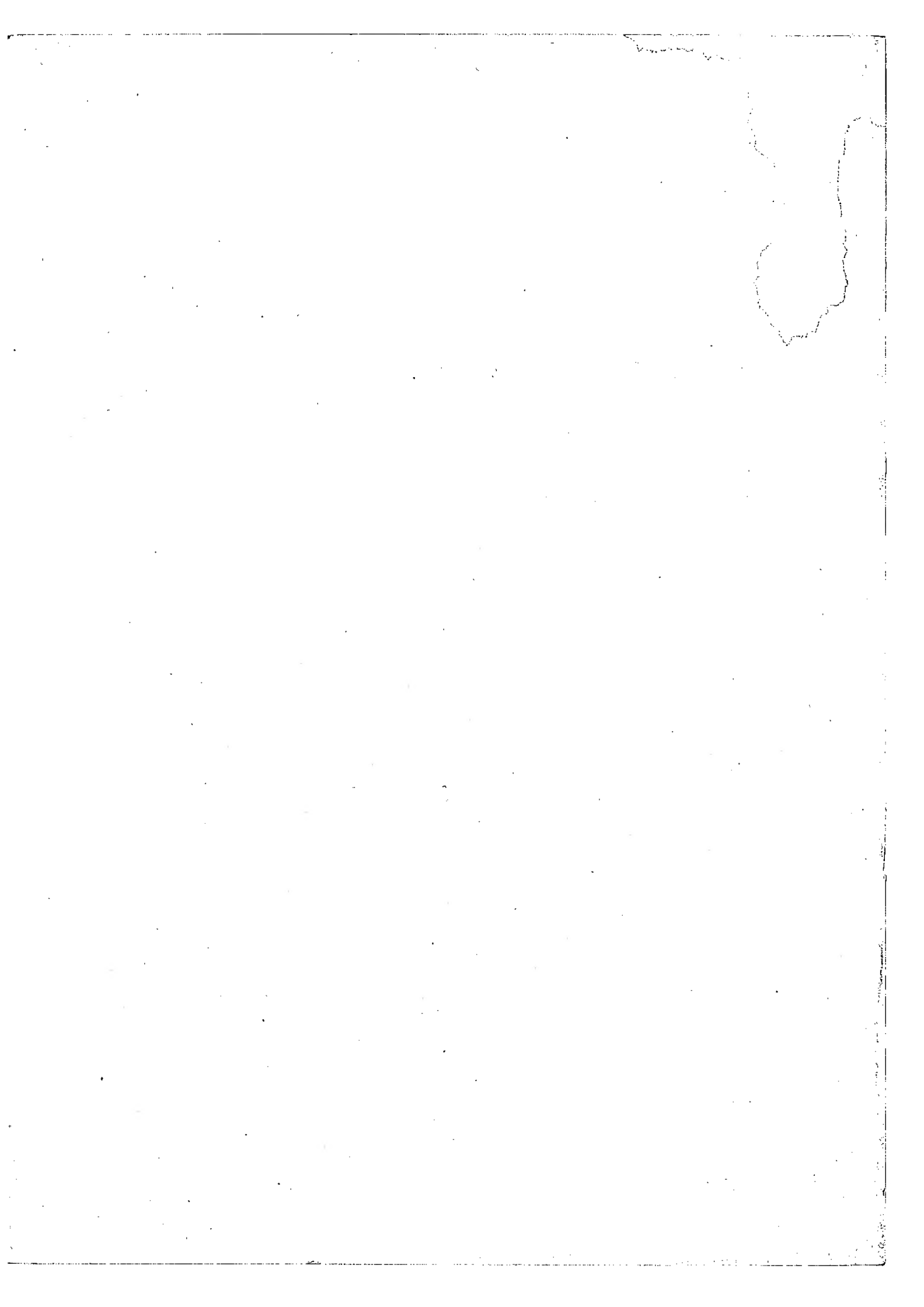
economic categories of capitalism.

Although Rosdolsky's book is far from easy to read, it offers a valuable entrance-way into the 'vanished civilisation' of classical Marxist economic theory, from Marx and Engels to the Stalinist clamp-down in the 1920s. Its chief defect — as on the theory of crises — is a method of arguing on many questions through caustic critical comments rather than positive scientific exposition. Thus (while the present reviewer agrees with Rosdolsky's conclusions on this point) nothing much is gained by trying to refute the theoreticians of 'state capitalism' in the USSR with isolated sentences from Marx's work (p.42, 525, etc.)

On the question of method, which Rosdolsky sees as central, he is effective in condemning vulgar readings of *Capital* as just a factual description of economic mechanisms, and stressing the importance of dialectics. But the matter is not advanced

very far beyond that point by his frequent comparisons of expressions and individual arguments of Marx's with passages from Hegel. We already have Marx's own word for it that he considered himself "a pupil" of Hegel; the problem is to know what exactly comprises the "rational kernel" of Hegel's dialectics, in opposition to the "mystical shell". Rosdolsky often cites approvingly passages from Georg Lukacs' *History and Class Consciousness*, giving the reader to understand that he regards Lukacs as the best exponent of that 'rational kernel'; but nowhere does Rosdolsky put his fragmentary remarks together into a rounded argument.

These faults are no doubt in part explained by the fact that the book was published posthumously. In any case it is a valuable source of working material for Marxists seeking to deepen their understanding of Marx's voluminous theoretical heritage.



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